DISCOURSES,

&c.

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE

LATE REV. CHRISTOPHER WELLS, B. D.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD; AND AFTERWARDS RECTOR OF REMENHAM, BERKS.

VOLUME II.

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MESSRS. LEIGH AND SOTHEBY, SOUTHAMPTON STREET;
AND
F. AND C. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1800.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE I.

FAITH IN CHRIST, AS THE AUTHOR AND GIVER OF SALVATION.

ROM. III, 20, 21, 22.

Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin; but now, the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ. ..... Page 17

DISCOURSE II.

CHRISTIAN BLESSEDNESS.

MATTHEW V. 1, 2.

And, seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and, when he was set, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth, and taught them. 50

DISCOURSE III.

THE HUNGRY SOUL FILLED.

MATTHEW v. 6.

Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. 65

DISCOURSE IV.

THE HUNGRY SOUL FILLED.

MATTHEW v. 6.

Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. 76

DISCOURSE V.

THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS FULFILLED.

MATTHEW v. 17, 18.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For, verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 87

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VI.

WORLDLY ANXIETY FORBIDDEN.

MATTHEW VI. 19, 20, 21.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 101

DISCOURSE VII.

THE SERVICE OF GOD AND MAMMON NOT POSSIBLE TOGETHER.

MATTHEW VI. 24.

No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or, else he will hold to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon. 117

DISCOURSE VIII.

DIRECTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER.

MATTHEW VII. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened

unto you. For every one, that asketh, receiveth; and he, that seeketh, findeth; and to him, that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone; or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him? 128

DISCOURSE IX.

DUTIES OF PARENTS AND MASTERS.

GENESIS XVIII. 19.

I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do judgment and justice; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. 144

DISCOURSE X.

MERCY PREFERRED TO SACRIFICE.

MATTHEW XII. 7.

If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. 160

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XI.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW XI. 29.

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. 174

DISCOURSE XII.

CHRIST'S ANSWER TO THE DISCIPLES OF ST. JOHN.

LUKE VII. 22.

Then Jesus answering said unto them; Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear; the dead are raised; to the poor the gospel is preached. 187

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS.

PHILIPPIANS III. 8, 9, 10.

Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do

count

count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. 202

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE SON OF MAN'S DEATH A RANSOM FOR MANY.

MARK X. 45.

The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many. 215

DISCOURSE XV.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL ON TRUE CHRISTIANS.

ACTS XXVI. 17, 18.

Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan

Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me..... 227

DISCOURSE XVI.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

LUKE XXIV. 45, 46, 47, 48.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things..... 239

DISCOURSE XVII.

THE SIN AND DANGER OF IMMORALITY AND UNBELIEF.

II THESS. I. 8.

Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ..... 256

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE SIN AND DANGER OF IMMORALITY AND UNBELIEF.

II THESS. I. 8.

Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.....273

DISCOURSE XIX.

THE GREAT SIN OF NEGLECTING THE GOSPEL.

HEBREWS II. 3.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?.....288

DISCOURSE XX.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

II TIM. III. 14, 15.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and been assured of; knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that, from a child, thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.....299

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXI.

REPENTANCE AND THE FEAR OF GOD NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

ACTS XIII. 26.

Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God; to you is the word of this salvation sent. 314

DISCOURSE XXII.

THE DUTIES AND REWARDS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PSALM XV. 1. 2.

Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? Even he, that leadeth an uncorrupt life and doeth the thing which is right. 332

DISCOURSE XXIII.

THE HOLY COMMUNION A MEMORIAL OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

I. COR. XI. 23.

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and, when he had

had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 346

DISCOURSE XXIV.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEGUN IN THIS WORLD.

LUKE XVII. 20, 21.

When he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come; he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. 359

DISCOURSE XXV.

THE SIN OF THE CHURCH OF ROME IN SHUTTING UP THE SCRIPTURES.

(Preached on the 5th of November)

PSALM CVII. 1, 2.

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is gracious and his mercy endureth for ever. Let them give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed and delivered from the hand of the enemy. 370

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXVI.

THE SERVICE REQUIRED OF CHRISTIANS.

JOHN IV. 23, 24.

The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth: for the father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they, that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. 388

DISCOURSE XXVII.

THE LEPER CLEANSED.

MATTHEW VIII. 1, 2.

When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold! there came a leper, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 400

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH.

GENESIS XXXIX. 9.

How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? 413

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXIX.

THE NECESSITY AND BENEFITS OF TRIALS AND AFFLICTIONS.

JAMES I. 12.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. 433

DISCOURSE XXX.

PRESENT SUFFERINGS NOT TO BE COMPARED WITH FUTURE GLORY.

ROM. VIII. 18.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. . . . 444

DISCOURSE XXXI.

THE BLESSING AND REWARD OF KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS.

REVELATION XXII. 14.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life. 457

LETTERS ON SEVERAL SUBJECTS. . . 473

24 OC 62

DISCOURSE I.

FAITH IN CHRIST, AS THE AUTHOR AND GIVER OF SALVATION.

ROM. III, 20, 21, 22.

Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin; but now, the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ.

DISC. I.

IT ſeems to be plainly aſſerted, not in this text only, but in the whole tenour of the goſpel, that faith in Chriſt, in whatever ſenſe it muſt be

 underſtood,

DISC. I. underſtood, is the neceſſary condition of that hope or ſalvation that is propoſed by him: at the ſame time it is certain, that this doctrine has ſome difficulty, or is at leaſt found to be the very offence of the goſpel to thoſe who cannot eaſily be charged with vice or immorality, and who ſeem to be in every other reſpect Chriſtians, if faith itſelf be not eſſential. The reaſon of this difficulty ſeems to be, that the goſpel is ſuppoſed to be a rule or ſyſtem of moral duties in the greateſt perfection and purity, by the performance of which we may be ſaved, or admitted to that favour with God, or receive that reward from him that is propoſed. Upon this ſuppoſition, no reaſon appears why faith in Chriſt himſelf ſhould be required, or any thing more than the performance of that duty, and of thoſe virtues, to which the ſalvation is annexed. It is evident, that this opinion muſt leſſen the obligation and duty to Chriſt himſelf, even in thoſe who receive their rule of life and morals from the goſpel; and others, that have any thought of virtue or goodneſs,

neſs, may ſeek it by other means, and hope to obtain ſalvation, or equal favour with God, by virtue and endeavours of their own. The goſpel, upon this ſuppoſition, muſt be compared and judged with any other book or writing, and Chriſt be no otherwiſe a Saviour, than as a teacher of a perfect rule, virtue, and morality, which we muſt practiſe and perform by our own ſtrength or virtue, and, from our own performance, have hopes of its reward. I think the goſpel, though it be allowed to be the moſt uſeful writing in the world, will not be much regarded upon this footing; and what there is more reaſon to fear is this, that our acknowledgment of Chriſt, or dependence and faith in him, ſince this is ſo plainly required by the goſpel, will not be full and ſufficient, by believing him to be the beſt teacher of virtue or morality. DISC. I.

The goſpel is proved to be a revelation or meſſage from God, or at leaſt the greatneſs and goodneſs of the things themſelves, when juſtly

DISC. I.

represented, will prove it: and, as we can have no other terms or hope of salvation, but from this gospel, and this opinion of Christ as a teacher only, is said to be founded upon the gospel itself, and to be agreeable to its doctrine, I hope it will not be improper to shew what may lead us to consider Christ's salvation in a higher sense; that this opinion, that the gospel is only a book of morality, and Christ only the author of a moral doctrine, is directly contrary to the whole tenour and strain of the gospel, as preached by Christ and his apostles; or that Christ is preached himself as more properly *the author and giver of salvation*: from which it will easily appear 2dly, That therefore faith or dependence upon him is justly and reasonably required, according to Christian principles. 3dly, and lastly, The necessity of preaching Christ, and faith in him, with the same reality and strength that is in scripture.

1st. I

1ſt. I am to ſhew, that this opinion that Chriſt is only the teacher of a moral doctrine is directly contrary to the whole tenour and ſtrain of the goſpel, as preached by Chriſt and his apoſtles. DISC. I.

It is certain that Chriſt is promiſed, expected, and in a manner ſuitable introduced into the world, as a *Saviour*, and with that name as a peculiar and diſtinguiſhed character. Now, if this name was given, or the word ſaid of any others, there would be a plain reaſon to underſtand it, when ſaid of Chriſt, in a different and higher ſenſe; becauſe he is ſaid expreſsly to be the "power of God to ſalvation." If it were ſaid of men, we ſhould be obliged to underſtand it improperly; becauſe they have no power to ſave; but there is no reaſon to underſtand it of Chriſt otherwiſe than in a real and the proper ſenſe; but the name and word is peculiar to Chriſt; and yet the apoſtles, and one of them eminently, fully preached the goſpel of Chriſt, and declared it to

DISC. be the whole will of God; and yet they have
L never given to them nor ever assume themselves his name; but, with perfect modesty, always making an essential difference between themselves and Christ. They know exactly how to distinguish their own parts, and that of Christ: they preach Christ as the author of salvation, and themselves the servants of all mankind for Christ's sake. But what reason can be assigned for this, if they preached the gospel, and all the doctrines of it more fully even than Christ, (for he left things for them to teach) but that the salvation of Christ consists in something else than in teaching and doctrine; that the work of redemption itself was our Saviour's; that he appointed others to teach and write, or that Paul was not crucified for us, as he says himself, and we were not baptized in the name of Paul, as the head and author of our salvation? No one can doubt but it is the scripture itself that has given men full notions in this respect, and has taught every plain Christian to make the distinction between

tween the inſtrument, and the proper cauſe and author of his ſalvation: the ſcripture muſt be directly inconſiſtent with itſelf, if it has given Chriſt this name for no other reaſon but his being a teacher of a moral doctrine, and a revealer of the will of God. DISC. I.

The word *gospel* itſelf, every one knows, does not ſignify a moral doctrine, but *glad tidings*, or a joyful meſſage; which a moral doctrine is not; but the leſs ſo for being perfect and pure, if men are not enabled to perform it. The forerunner of our Saviour himſelf, and his diſciples, when he ſent them, all preached in this ſtyle as *glad tidings*, or the meſſage of ſalvation and joy. They do not bid men repent, becauſe a perfect moral doctrine would be delivered, but becauſe "the kingdom of heaven was at hand." Now this, to anſwer to the ſame expreſſion, could no more be virtue without an author or a head, or virtue without a kingdom, than it could be a kingdom without virtue; and the abſtract notion

DISC. I. of a moraliſt is as far from the juſtneſs of the expreſſion as the groſs expectation of the Jew. The event itſelf between theſe two opinions anſwered to the word; and the kingdom that was at hand was in the moſt real ſenſe a kingdom of virtue and righteouſneſs, of which Chriſt was the author and the head. We ought to obſerve in what ſtrain the Baptiſt, who ſo well performed his office of forerunner, recommended him to the world: he does not ſay that he would be the teacher of a moral rule, or the inſtitutor of ineffectual rites; (this he himſelf could do; he could teach men their duty in their ſeveral callings, and could baptize with water, as an emblem of the forgiveneſs of ſins) but that he, that would come after him, would be the "Lamb of God, that "would take away the ſins of the world, that he "ſhould be more powerful than he, and ſhould "baptize men with the Holy Ghoſt and with "fire." This is plainly the ſame as St. Paul ſays; that "his kingdom did not conſiſt in word "but in power;" or that he ſhould be a real and

effectual

effectual Saviour, and not the teacher of a moral doctrine only. It is true, that Chriſt preached a moral doctrine and gave precepts of virtue, without faith, which are no otherwiſe Chriſtian than as they are pure and perfect, and are not founded on or referred to himſelf; but it is plain, according to the œconomy and conduct of his deſign, that he could ſpeak no otherwiſe whilſt he was upon earth; which may ſhew the difference that is ſo great betwixt a teacher and a Saviour, at different times, even in Chriſt himſelf. But it is certain that by his Apoſtles, when his real character was manifeſted and his kingdom was begun, no virtue or ſalvation was preached otherwiſe than by faith, and that by their doctrine, theſe precepts, the laws of his kingdom now, cannot be performed acceptably, but by his ſpirit and in his name. And, though he could teach no otherwiſe, yet it is plain, through the whole courſe of his miniſtry and humiliation, he gave the plaineſt ſigns and intimations of his future glory, and of a divine and effectual power DISC. II.

to

DISC. II. to save; at the same time, and every where, that he preached the glad tidings of the kingdom, which was the gospel, healing every sickness and every disease among the people; which could not be proofs of a moral doctrine, which must be reasonable and prove itself, as it is justly observed, but inconsistently with one who believes Christ to have been only a teacher and a messenger from God. Every Christian, for the sake of what is properly Christianity, ought to observe this with him, because it immediately destroys his own argument and design; for Christ did not work his miracles to no purpose or in vain: and, as they could not be used to prove a moral doctrine, so it is plain he did not use them to gain a greater regard or attention to it. If that had been the design of his miracles, he would have demanded that only; but instead of this, we see he demands nothing but faith in himself in a very peculiar manner: and which, as it now surprises many, would be really unaccountable, if he were only the teacher of a doctrine and the deliverer

of

of

of a meſſage, who is not concerned in the doc- DISC. 1.
trine he teaches, or meſſage that he delivers, and ought not to make any conditions for himſelf. It is plain, therefore, that the deſign of his miracles was really to prove his own power, or, as he directly applies them himſelf, to prove, becauſe they were done "by the ſpirit of God," that a kingdom and power of God "was come "upon them." Of this theſe miracles were the proper and immediate proofs; and, if the kingdom of God did not conſiſt in health of the body, and this power and ſpirit was not to be exerted chiefly to be the remedy of bodily ſickneſs and diſeaſe, we may be ſatisfied that theſe miracles and this faith in himſelf demanded by them, were only intimations before hand in our Saviour's manner, (who, it is evident, ſpoke and acted always as having his whole deſign in view) that faith in him would be required afterward to our higheſt ſalvation by the ſame ſpirit and power of God,

Another

DISC. I. Another intimation of this is his teaching his diſciples the neceſſity and power of faith upon all occaſions, and training them up to this dependence upon himſelf; which is unaccountable, unleſs it be referred to the glory and character which he ſhould receive higher than that of a teacher. He told them before hand, that he ſhould die, but voluntarily, and "to give his "life a ranſom for many;" that he ſhould riſe again, and that they ſhould not taſte of death, though himſelf ſhould, before the kingdom of God ſhould come with power. It is plain, that one of the Evangeliſts or hiſtorians of his life wrote with this very deſign, to ſhew that he did not teach a moral doctrine, but was himſelf the real Chriſt, the giver of goodneſs, life, and immortality to mankind. He tells us firſt, by his own authority, as an Apoſtle, that this word of the goſpel "was from the beginning with God, "and was God; that he was the life of men, "and the light that enlighteneth every man that "cometh into the world; that, to as many as "received

" received him, he gave power or right to become DISC.
" the ſons of God," by receiving from him more I.
than can poſſibly be received by a word or a doctrine. He afterwards relates our Saviour's own diſcourſes, which neceſſarily imply he was " the power of God to ſalvation," and not the teacher of a morality or a rule. When Nicodemus came to him by night, and owned his miracles, his anſwer was, that, unleſs ſtill greater miracles ſhould be done, " unleſs men ſhould be " born and begotten again, they could not enter " into the kingdom of God." When he underſtood this not too really but groſsly, our Saviour aſſerts the ſame thing, with the moſt expreſs aſſeveration, only explaining it, " that, unleſs " a man be begotten again of water and of the " ſpirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of " God." He gives the reaſon why this new birth is neceſſary; becauſe " that which is born " of the fleſh is no other than fleſh;" periſhable and mortal; and " that which is born of the " Spirit is Spirit;" for that theſe are two principles

DISC. 1. ciples or natures eſſentially and really different from each other. There can be no truſt to any language, and no ſcripture can be a rule, if theſe words, ſo clear and ſo ſtrongly affirmed, do not ſignify that men muſt receive more than a moral doctrine to be ſaved: for it is plain that Chriſt himſelf is, by his own power, the giver of this ſpirit, and of life or immortality. He tells the woman of Samaria, that, "if ſhe had known "the gift of God, and who it was that deſired "of her water to drink, ſhe would have aſked "of him, and he would have given her that living "water, which would be in him to whom it is "given a living principle or ſource ſpringing up "into everlaſting life." If this is not clear and certain, it is expreſsly explained to us, ſo that we cannot avoid knowing the real ſenſe, in another paſſage, the occaſion and propriety of which will be ſeen from the circumſtances, and in the place itſelf. It is where our Saviour ſays to the Jews, "If any man thirſt, let him come to me "and drink: he that believeth on me," (according

ing to the prophecies concerning Chriſt) "out DISC.
"of his heart," or inward parts, "ſhall flow I.
"rivers of living water." We might doubt what is meant in theſe words, if the Evangeliſt did not expreſsly determine the laſt, that our Saviour "ſpoke it of the ſpirit, which they that believe "on him ſhould receive." If this could without contradiction to the whole ſcripture be interpreted of a pure and ſpiritual doctrine, it is plain it cannot be ſo in this place, from what the Evangeliſt ſays, that "the ſpirit was not yet given, "becauſe Jeſus was not yet glorified;" but the moſt perfect and ſpiritual doctrine was given before: this then was an act of higher power, and the gift of Chriſt, as a real Saviour, exalted to that kingdom that conſiſted not in word but in power. He tells the Jews, upon occaſion of his healing a lame man, (which was ſhewing what uſe our Saviour himſelf made of his miracles) that "he would do ſtill greater things;" for "as the "father had life in himſelf, ſo had he given to "the Son to have life in himſelf, and to give

"it

DISC. I. "it to whom he would;" that "the hour was "coming and then was, that the dead ſhould "hear the voice of the Son of God, and they "that heard ſhould live." This is explained of that riſing to a new life at preſent, which is ſo continually ſpoken of in ſcripture in the ſame expreſſive language, becauſe the future reſurrection ſeems to be ſpoken of afterward, not as a greater, but as a more ſignal, inſtance of the ſame power. "Marvel not at this; the hour is coming, "when all that are in their graves ſhall hear his "voice, and ſhall come forth." It is plain, from the whole tenour of the New Teſtament, that theſe are both effects of *the power of God*, not of a word or doctrine, which at leaſt one of them, the future reſurrection, cannot be; and they are both here ſpoken of as what might be expected or conceived from the power of his miracles, ſince theſe were done by the ſpirit of God: ſo that we ſee here what it was that our Saviour himſelf connected with his miracles, and what power in himſelf he intended they ſhould prove.

prove. If any one ſhould think, againſt the plain appearance, that the full ſenſe of theſe ſtrong words is this, that life will be given by God hereafter to thoſe who will obſerve Chriſt's doctrine, and that, upon this account, Chriſt may be ſaid to give us that life which we ſhall receive from God; I ſuppoſe this will appear to be not proper either in ſenſe or expreſſion, and is contrary to the cleareſt words that "Chriſt had "this life in himſelf, and judgment given to him," or a full diſcretionary power to give it to whom he would: and to what is probably the meaning of what he ſays afterwards to the Jews; that they ſearched the ſcriptures, or the written word of God, "thinking that by them they could have "eternal life," and would not come to him from whom only they could have it. Upon the next occaſion that is related of his feeding thouſands with five loaves and two ſmall fiſhes, when the people ſeemed to aſk of him a doctrine, or what they ſhould do to do works acceptable to God; he uſes the miracle as he does all the reſt, to

DISC. I.

DISC. I. require principally and first of all *faith in himself*, as him whom the Father had anointed, and "sealed" with his Spirit, to be *the Saviour of the world*. Of this divine power in him every miracle was in some measure a proof; and it was, therefore, a just occasion, not a mere handle of words, that he took to tell them that "himself was the bread that came down from heaven, and should give life unto the world;" that "this was the will of him that sent him, that "every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on "him, might have everlasting life; and that "himself would raise him up at the last day." I suppose it is plain, that this life is given by his own power; because faith or dependence upon him is required as the condition; and from the words themselves, because he cannot properly be said to give it by his doctrine. He makes a very important distinction between himself and all other teachers, that "the sheep are his own." He speaks often in this manner; that "those, "who should believe on him, were given to him "by

" by the Father;" and Christians are said to be DISC. I.
" his people, his inheritance, his possession pur-
" chased;" but no teacher, as such, has any possession or property in his disciples; and the apostles are commanded to feed *his* sheep and not their own. When he says to his disciples, that " he is the true vine, and they are the branches;" and that, as " the branch cannot bear fruit, ex-
" cept it abide in the vine, no more can they,
" except they abide in him;" it plainly implies a more proper dependence of Christians upon him, than of disciples upon a teacher; for, if the comparison be just, they must not receive from him only a doctrine, but partake with him in a real life, as branches do with the vine, and members with the head; which is the other comparison by which this dependence of Christians upon Christ is so often represented in scripture. It may easily be said, that these are metaphors and comparisons, and so they may be slightly passed over, as if nothing certain could be determined from them: a metaphor, if it be just, is no other

DISC. I. than a truth, or a notion made ſenſible by being ſhewn in real things; for which reaſon they are found moſt in the moſt ancient and beſt writers, as the ſtrong and juſt impreſſions of nature, before men had invented words and notions of their own; and in ſcripture, where they are uſed, and in the goſpel, the character of which is faith, where every thing is real, and where by the power of God or Chriſt, which is equal to the words, every thing is fulfilled in its juſt and proper ſenſe, there is that plain reaſon to underſtand the words of ſcripture differently from the words of men; and it is by this juſtneſs only that the importance and dignity of ſcripture can be maintained; which, if the words have not their weight, will ſoon be diſregarded, and laid aſide for other writings which are better as words, if that reality and truth which is the proper difference of ſcripture is given up.

This is Chriſt's own doctrine of his being a Saviour, in the moſt real ſenſe, and of the neceſſity

ceſſity of faith or dependence upon him: but it is plain that the goſpel was not directly or fully preached, and could not be, whilſt he was himſelf upon earth; and that we may now expect to have clearer declarations of his being the Saviour, from his apoſtles who preached after his aſcenſion, when he was received to the glory which he had with God before the world began. It was then his kingdom in reſpect of men took place, or then it was ſenſibly declared, according to the outward œconomy. His real kingdom began with the creation itſelf; ſince it is expreſsly ſaid, that all things that are in heaven and in earth, whether they be thrones or dominions; all the orders of heavenly beings were created by him, and for him, and in him they conſiſt, united to him and under him, as the head of all principality and power. The kingdom that he obtained and purchaſed by his obedience and ſufferings unto death, was the permiſſion and power to recover mankind, that one ſheep loſt and fallen, whom he came to ſeek and to ſave, by uniting him to

DISC. I.

DISC. I. himself and to his kingdom, that he should be no more a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow citizen with the saints of the household or family of God. It is in this sense that Christians are said to be raised with him, being united to him at present by his power and virtue. At this time we may see that the apostles did by no means preach a moral doctrine, but Christ as the real and effectual Saviour, and faith or dependence upon him as the only means of salvation on our part. The first act of his power was to send the Holy Spirit upon his apostles, not only to enable them to preach his gospel; (for if it was given by the ministry of the apostles to all believers in a manner perfectly wonderful, beyond all example and resemblance of any thing ever seen in human affairs) but properly as the great gift and essential blessing of Christ promised from the beginning, given at that time sensibly and visibly with talents and gifts, to be the immediate proof that he was in the strictest sense the Saviour of the world. At this time we may see that the apostles had

had no reaſon to preach a moral doctrine, but Chriſt perfectly proved by the viſible effects to be a Saviour, and faith or dependence upon him as the only means of ſalvation on our part. This is ſo plainly the ſtrain of their ſermons, as related in the hiſtory, that I ſhall not quote them, but only obſerve this, that, though it is evident that, according to their preaching, a moral doctrine cannot be the means, yet virtue itſelf, the moſt real virtue, is the end of all, and the ſalvation of Chriſt itſelf which they preach; as will be plain from the whole ſtrain of their ſermons, and may be ſeen in ſhort from the concluſion and ſtreſs of one of them in theſe words; "Ye are the chil- "dren of the prophets and of the covenant "which God made with our fathers, ſaying unto "Abraham, In thee ſhall all the nations of the "earth be bleſſed; unto you firſt God having "raiſed up his ſon Jeſus, hath ſent him to bleſs "you, in turning away every one of you from "his iniquities." DISC. I.

DISC. I.

This was the declaration of St. Peter, the apoſtle of the Jews; and, if any one ſhould deſire any more ſatisfaction what his doctrine was, or ſhould ſuſpect that he retained any of his former ignorance, or had now the notion of a worldly kingdom which he once had, he ought in juſtice to read his Epiſtles; where he will find, to his greateſt ſatisfaction, that this illiterate fiſherman, formerly a prejudiced Jew, had forgotten the kingdom which he once thought of, and is able to ſpeak in a ſerious and proper ſtyle the pureſt and ſtrongeſt morals flowing from and founded on Chriſt, ſupported by ſuch as are indeed "great "and precious promiſes," the hopes of partaking of the divine nature, (hereafter) and of "an in-"heritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that "fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for us." It is the ſame in the writings of all the other apoſtles of the Jews; which there would be no reaſon to obſerve, if it were not ſaid that theſe preached a worldly and partial goſpel, and a ſalvation that did not conſiſt in virtue and goodneſs; upon which

which ſuppoſition the faith of Chriſt muſt give place to a better doctrine of virtue and morality, and becauſe, on the other ſide, St. Paul is commended to be the only candid and truly Chriſtian one, and it is ſaid, that he preached the doctrine of reaſon and morality, different from the reſt; it will be eaſy to ſhew, by pointing to his Epiſtles, and leaving them to every one to be conſidered in this light, that he, though tender to his gentiles in relieving them from the Jewiſh law, never ſought to pleaſe them, but was true to his maſter and Saviour Chriſt, and preached *him* every where as *the ſole author of ſalvation*, not only againſt the Jewiſh law, but equally againſt the Gentile philoſophy, and all human means. This is evident from his epiſtle to the Romans; where his doctrine, the ſame as in all the reſt, is explained more fully, and his ſenſe more indiſputable, becauſe it is determined by the argument. The deſign of it is to prove that "Chriſt is the power of God unto ſalva-"tion" alike to the Jew, and the Greek, or Gentile: DISC. I.

DISC. II. Gentile: for this reaſon he conſiders the condition of the Gentiles, and that they were not ſaved by their moral law (which he well underſtood and conſidered) and the improvements of reaſon from the greateſt corruption, and of the Jews who were not better by their law from God. What hinders many from ſeeing the full extent of his argument is an opinion that, by the law of Moſes, he means the ritual or ceremonial law; but we ſee that he never mentions any other all along but the moral law. It is plain he does not mean the law of rites, which he does not mention, but the *moral* law, becauſe he ſays it is the ſame as the law written in the heart, and becauſe all the tranſgreſſions that he mentions are of moral commandments, and therefore his concluſion in the words of my text "that by a law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified before "God; for by a law is only the knowledge of "ſin," includes the law of the Jews and Gentiles together, and is a poſitive aſſertion that no law or moral doctrine can of itſelf, and by human

man endeavours, juſtify men, or unite them to true goodneſs before God, but is of uſe only to give the ſenſe of ſin, and not a power to avoid it; and, therefore, he ſays the righteouſneſs that is from God was manifeſted or offered to men, becauſe they can have no righteouſneſs of their own without dependence upon a moral law, that righteouſneſs that is offered by faith or dependence upon Chriſt to all who will receive him for their Saviour; "for all have ſinned," and are fallen from, or are deprived of, the glory of God. This, by the conſtant uſe of it in his epiſtles, is not a general word, but a juſt, proper and determined expreſſion, and the ſame as the image of God, or original and real righteouſneſs, from which men are fallen, and to which their hope is only by Chriſt to be reſtored; for he is only as the remedy equal to the original, and the giver of that real and eſſential righteouſneſs loſt; which he ſays at large afterwards and in the ſtrongeſt words. DISC. I.

It

DISC. I. It is plain from this, that it is this great apoſtle's doctrine, which cannot be diſregarded without violence to the plaineſt words, that *Chriſt is a real Saviour*, the giver of a righteouſneſs ſo real, that it is itſelf the principle of life or immortality; that muſt needs be real, that has real effects. The principle of goodneſs, that muſt be received from Chriſt, is the ſame that ſhall quicken our mortal bodies hereafter; which gives ſuch an idea of the reality of virtue and goodneſs in Chriſt, and its inſeparate and immediate connection with the glory and happineſs that ought, for the honour of Chriſtianity, to be ſhewn in the ſtrongeſt light, as an immediate anſwer to the objections of our beſt moraliſts, who it is plain did not underſtand it. This reality of Chriſt's ſalvation runs through all his expreſſions with the moſt perfect harmony and conſiſtence, gives life and force to them all; ſome of which evidently require it, and cannot, without this ſuppoſition, by any rules of language, be defended. It is the ſpecial argument

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and main point inſiſted upon in all his epiſtles? the firſt part in every one is either to prove, when there was moſt need of it, as to the Romans and Galatians, or elſe to aſſert and deſcribe, in the ſtrongeſt expreſſions, the power of Chriſt, as the only author and giver of righteouſneſs and goodneſs. This is the only principle, which he firſt lays down, and ſometimes proves by ſuch arguments as it could be proved; and afterwards from this his morals flow, all referred to and derived from Chriſt, with that purity and ſtrength that is not ſeen in any other moral writings in the world. It is plain that it is Chriſt himſelf, and not morality, that inſpired him both in his life and in his doctrine; the life that he lived, and the doctrine that he ſpoke, was not the ſame as other men's, he did not live or ſpeak by the ſame principle, but by the faith of Chriſt by whom he lived. It cannot be ſaid that this is a metaphor and ſignifies morality, becauſe it is not only contrary to the words, but to his direct argument and deſign, as well as to his moſt expreſs aſſertions, "that

DISC. I.

DISC. I. "that he counted all things but loss," the chief of which was his righteousness by a moral law, "that he might gain Christ, and might be found "in him, not having his own righteousness, "which is of the law, but that which is through "the faith of Christ, the righteousness that is "from God by faith." I suppose it cannot be thought after this, that he preached a doctrine different from the other apostles, and that it appears that Christ is preached continually through scripture as a real Saviour, the proper author and giver of that righteousness and goodness, which is salvation itself. And now the necessity of faith and dependance upon Christ will appear in short, and the perfect reasonableness of it upon the principles of the gospel. It is a real difficulty and seems unaccountable that faith in Christ himself should be so peculiarly required, if he is supposed to be only the deliverer of a moral doctrine, and no more than a messenger though of the highest salvation from God. But if he be himself, by his own effectual virtue and grace, the author of this

salvation

ſalvation and the only author of it, wherever it is, DISC. I.
which is the doctrine of ſcripture, it is in the nature of things juſt that, when this is revealed to us, we ſhould truſt or depend upon him, as our only Saviour and deliverer. It is as reaſonable to require ſuch faith for this ſalvation as it was when he healed the lame and blind, to require that they ſhould beſeech him, that they ſhould know they were helpleſs, and that he was able to relieve them; that, if men have no righteouſneſs or power of their own, they ſhould know their want, and receive his aſſiſtance with that acknowledgement that is eſſential to any virtue, in a creature who can have nothing that he does not receive from God; or if Chriſt be this great mediator between God and man, and the conveyer of all his grace and goodneſs to us, which is the point of revelation from Chriſt; ſuch faith as this is not an aſſent of our underſtanding, or believing in that ſenſe any doctrine of the goſpel, which we might wonder if of itſelf it could recommend us to God, but an acknowledgement

DISC. I. ledgement and dependence upon Chriſt, to which the belief and knowledge of his goſpel and ſalvation is the natural means. And this is not ſo eaſy a thing, but requires the renouncing of all our evil paſſions and deſires, and of that which is moſt intimate to us, and the laſt ſelf-poſſeſſion that is parted with, the truſt and confidence in ourſelves. This is the partition that ſtands between us men and God; and, if it be difficult to give this up, it muſt be done for our own ſakes, if it be in the nature of things, as well as required in the goſpel, the neceſſary diſpoſition to receive ſalvation by him.

And we muſt ſee, at the ſame time, the neceſſity of preaching Chriſt or the goſpel in this manner, or as it is in the ſcripture. If it be our duty to preach the goſpel, though it be before we know Chriſt's power or ſalvation, we can preach it no otherwiſe than as we find it in the ſcripture itſelf. It is not ſubmitted as it is there to any inclinations or natural deſires of men, but ſeems directly intended

intended to destroy every thing that is our own, except that submission and obedience that it requires. It seems to be the infallible mark that it is divine, that it tends solely to the glory of God. DISC. II.

DISC. II.

DISCOURSE II.

CHRISTIAN BLESSEDNESS.

MATTHEW v. 1, 2.

And, seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and, when he was set, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth, and taught them.

DISC. II. OUR Saviour's doctrine cannot be better explained than from this his ſermon upon the mount; where moſt of it is comprehended in the ſmalleſt compaſs. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that, though it may be very different from the common notions of men, and may ſeem too ſtrict and too difficult to be practiſed by us; yet ſtill it is ſuch goodneſs,

as

as was fit for a divine Saviour to require, who came into this world to prepare us for a better and happier life hereafter. And, at the ſame time, that it is ſuch as our own reaſon muſt allow to be good, and that it is not inconſiſtent with, but will promote our real good, ſatisfaction, and happineſs in this life. "When he was ſet down; (for that was the manner in which the Jewiſh Rabbis taught, and our Saviour took it upon him) his diſciples came to him and ſtood near:" for this is juſt in divine things, that "to him, "who hath, ſhall be given, and he ſhall have "abundance;" but others, there is reaſon to think, were not excluded, but thoſe only who had no deſire to hear. Then he ſaid; "Bleſſed "are the poor in ſpirit:" *i. e.* thoſe who are content to be poor, or who take no inordinate pleaſure in the riches and advantages of this world; "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Bleſ-"ſed are they that mourn;" who are ſerious and compaſſionate; who feel their own great and real misfortunes, and thoſe of others; "for they ſhall

DISC. II.

DISC. II. "be comforted. Bleſſed are the meek; for they "ſhall inherit the earth." There is ſome difficulty in this paſſage: but that opinion ſeems moſt probable, that it is a promiſe to his diſciples of the new world, the world that is to come; for our Saviour did not take upon him to diſpoſe of this. "Bleſſed are they, which do hunger "and thirſt after righteouſneſs; for they ſhall be "filled. Bleſſed are the merciful; for they ſhall "obtain mercy. Bleſſed are the pure in heart; "for they ſhall ſee God. Bleſſed are the peace-"makers;" they who make peace; "for they "ſhall be called the children of God. Bleſſed "are they, who are perſecuted for righteouſneſs' "ſake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Bleſſed are ye, when men ſhall revile you, and "perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil "againſt you falſely for my ſake. Rejoice, and "be exceeding glad; for great is your reward "in heaven; for ſo perſecuted they the prophets "which were before you." It will eaſily be thought, that this indeed is not a ſpirit or temper,

that

that is very fit for the greatneſs or proſperity of this life. But it is ſuch a diſpoſition, as will prepare us for another and better world; becauſe it is ſuch an one, as proceeds from a knowledge or ſenſe of the vanity or imperfection of preſent things: for it is ſuch a ſenſe, that will diſpoſe to be poor, to be ſo willingly, and in the midſt of riches; it is ſuch a ſenſe that, when it mourns for real and great afflictions, will find nothing that can ſatisfy in this world; and ſo of the reſt. It is a mind, that is above this world, that will hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, and for that place where righteouſneſs ſhall dwell for ever. And we ſee what it is that our Saviour has in view, and what it is that he promiſes to his diſciples; that "theirs ſhall be the kingdom of heaven;" or "that they ſhall ſee God;" or that "they ſhall "be comforted" and ſatisfied, and ſhall have all their utmoſt wiſhes anſwered hereafter. And, though the diſpoſition, which our Saviour deſcribes, may not be fit to deſire or to enjoy the things of this world, and though it will not be always valued or approved, yet very

DISC. II.

DISC. II. often, when it is not approved, it is because it is imperfect, or not sincere, or not settled enough. But they, who consider it, will see that such a disposition, as our Saviour describes, is that which always comes nearest to real and to great happiness even in this life: for it requires no very great reflection to see, that real happiness always is a serious thing; that no one can be happy even in a worldly sense, but those who are sensible of real ills or afflictions either to themselves or others: for insensible people never can be happy, nor those who have not their ill, or their afflictions softened by the duties of religion, and by the sense of a goodness that still governs every thing, and the hopes of better things that are reserved beyond this life. Without this it is melancholy, or rather it is despair, dissatisfaction, or misery. It is that worldly sorrow which the scripture distinguishes from that which is good.

After this, our Saviour comes to his precepts, or his commands, telling his disciples first, what great

great things are expected from them; which is common with him to raiſe their thoughts, even when moſt he deſired to keep them humble. But he only knew how to do this: and his doctrine will certainly do both to thoſe who underſtand and truly practiſe it. I mean it will make our purpoſe great and our behaviour humble, both together, as you may perceive in the great things which he ſays to his diſciples. "Ye are "the ſalt of the earth: but, if the ſalt have loſt "its ſavour, wherewith ſhall it be ſalted? It is "thenceforth good for nothing, but to be caſt "out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are "the light of the world. A city, that is ſet on "an hill, cannot be hid;" neither is this the deſign, when "men light a candle, to put it "under a buſhel; but they ſet it on a candle-"ſtick, that it may give light to all that are in "the houſe. Let your light ſo ſhine before men, "that they may ſee your good works, and glo-"rify your father which is in heaven." DISC. II.

DISC. II.

Here it is that our Saviour ſpeaks great things to his diſciples, as he does at other times; even when moſt he deſigned to humble and to keep them low. He knew how to do this, and it is this oppoſition of things which gives true knowledge. And the ſpirit of Chriſt and of his religion is not narrow and confined; but ſuch as comprehends every thing, that is any way valuable or right; and even the extremes on either ſide; but reconciles and unites them in the right itſelf. Here then our Saviour ſays to thoſe plain men, who were to be humble and mortified in the higheſt degree, and who were to aſcribe nothing to themſelves; he ſays to them, "Ye are the ſalt of the earth;" ye are they, from whom the world itſelf is to learn goodneſs. It is to proceed from you, or by your means. But here he gives them a ſevere warning or caution. "But, "if the ſalt itſelf ſhall loſe its ſavour, where-"with ſhall it be ſalted?" There is no remedy. "It is good for nothing, but to be caſt out and "to be trodden under foot of men." This indeed

deed is a ſevere warning or caution to all of us, when we take upon us our Chriſtian profeſſion, and endeavour ſeriouſly to obtain that virtue or goodneſs, which our holy religion teaches. This is a ſtrong warning to us, to perſevere, to improve, and to go on, as far as we can, to perfection. The attempt itſelf, and the weak endeavour to obtain this better goodneſs and ſpirit, than is neceſſary for this world, may be a diſgrace to us; if we give it up and fall back to other things; and by having attempted better things, if we entirely fail of them, we have then loſt time, and we ſhall be leſs fit for other things, in which thoſe, who have minded them, will eaſily be better than we are. But our Saviour's deſign is to ſhew his diſciples the great things, which in ſome ſenſe are expected from them. "Ye are the light of the world. A city, that "is ſet on an hill, cannot be hid. Neither do "men light a candle, and put it under a buſhel; "but they ſet it on a candleſtick, and it gives "light to all that are in the houſe: ſo let your "light DISC. III.

DISC. III "light ſhine before men, that they may ſee your "good works, and glorify your Father, which is "in heaven."

It is of uſe to bring theſe paſſages together to your view, and to dwell upon them, becauſe it happens in the things of religion more than any others, that being excellent, (even for the matter in which they are ſpoken, as well as the ſubſtance and the deſign) yet being often read or heard without attention, they ſtrike us leſs, and are conſidered for that reaſon; ſo that it is neceſſary to dwell upon them, and ſo far only to explain them, that we may ſee it is impoſſible that the ſame things ſhould be ſaid better than as they are. It will be plain, that this ſpeaking to his diſciples, and telling them what they are deſigned for, is a proper preface to thoſe ſeveral rules and precepts, which are as near to a perfect ſyſtem, as it is neceſſary any ſhould be, and which he delivers afterwards. He tells them by this before hand, that his precepts will be in many

many reſpects, either in the things themſelves, DISC. II.
or in the degree, different from and above what had been commonly thought; and that his diſciples would of neceſſity be diſtinguiſhed and be remarkable; and that it is as impoſſible they ſhould be hid, as a city ſet on an hill: nor was it indeed intended that they ſhould; for "men "do not light a candle, and put it under a "buſhel or cover it; but ſet it in a candleſtick," or with ſome advantage, "that it may give light "to all that are in the houſe." If the religion is better than the world has been uſed to, or had ever known before, it is intended that you ſhould ſhew it, and that from you others may learn it, or at leaſt may learn to glorify him who is the author of it.

But this only is what I am to ſhew; how it is that this exhortation to his diſciples is conſiſtent and agreeing with the humility which our Saviour always expects from them, and with which he ſays afterward (and with ſo great care) that,

when

DISC. II. when they do their alms or their *righteousness*, as it is in the margin of the Bible, this being a general precept, they ſhould not "do it before "men, to be ſeen of them:" for, if you do, "ye have no reward of your Father which is in "heaven. For, when thou doeſt thine alms," (as one inſtance of goodneſs and the love of God) "do not ſound a trumpet before thee, "as the hypocrites do, in the ſynagogues and in "the ſtreets, that they may have glory of men: "verily I ſay unto you, they have their reward," (in that glory; and they can have no more!) "But when thou doeſt thine alms, let not thy "left hand know what thy right hand doeth: "and, when thou prayeſt, thou ſhall not be as "the hypocrites are; for they love to pray "ſtanding in the ſynagogues, and in the corners "of the ſtreet, that they may be ſeen of men." Our Saviour ſays, that "they have their reward:" but, "when thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, "and pray to thy Father, who is in ſecret," and who is preſent every where; "and he, who

"ſeeth

" ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly." DISC. What is to be conſidered is, how do theſe pre- II. cepts agree with what our Saviour ſays before, that " their light ſhould ſhine before men; that " men, ſeeing their good works, may glorify our " Father who is in heaven?

Firſt of all, our Saviour has explained it himſelf, when he ſays that ſome did their works, not only that they might be ſeen of men, but that they themſelves might have glory from them. Now this is very different from what he ſaid before; " that men, ſeeing your good works, may " glorify your Father which is in heaven." This is a very different thing; and, if any man is really good, he will neither ſhew nor conceal it abſolutely, but do always what is beſt. For it is right and good to deſire, if we are ſincere, and endeavour to be virtuous and to do well, that others *ſhould* ſee it, and ſhould have the benefit to themſelves of the example; which is the meaning of what is ſaid, that men ſhould glorify

God,

Diſc. II. God, whoſe worſhip and religion they ſee to have ſo good effects. The chief thing is to ſee and to judge well; that though our Saviour's precepts are ſtrict, and though virtue and goodneſs is ſo in the real intention and deſign always; (for it is the heart that religion governs) yet it is never ſcrupulous, but conſiders always what is beſt in every thing. It will, therefore, be ſecret in its good actions, but perhaps not always ſo: not if it is neceſſary, or if it may ſerve a good purpoſe, to be known. Another thing is this: that which our Saviour commands to be done ſecretly, are indeed ſuch things, as may be feigned or done for ill purpoſes; for which reaſon it was neceſſary to give thoſe precepts, and to give them ſtrictly. For the outward action is not always a proof of the intention. But what our Saviour means, when he ſays, that the light of his diſciples ſhould be ſeen, is not the particular actions, but the temper and ſpirit of his religion, and the general good diſpoſition which proceeds from it: and of this he does not require that they ſhould take

take any pains to shew it; but he says indeed, that there would be no need of any, but that it would be impossible it should be hidden or concealed; which must certainly be true of such a mind or spirit that is truly Christian. It cannot be hidden. And when he says afterwards, that our good works should shine before men, requiring that we should desire this, it is for this reason, which is perfectly right and good, and which is itself the remedy against glory to ourselves; that we should desire to bring others to the same or to greater degrees of goodness, by what they see, and that God should have the glory, and not ourselves. And this should be observed, that it is indeed true according to the scripture language, that good works do not mean merely the outward actions; but include the real intention and government of the mind. This any one will see, who considers what St. Paul says; "that God will render to every one "according to his works." And then afterwards, as explaining this; "that God will judge "the

Disc. II.

DISC. II. "the ſecrets and intentions of every heart." Now this general temper and diſpoſition cannot be feigned; and, if it is good, we ſhall do right and perfectly well, to deſire that it may be ſeen. So that what our Saviour has ſaid that we ſhould be private in our good actions, and yet that we ſhould not be unwilling that our good works, our good intention, and good endeavours, ſhould be ſeen, is perfectly conſiſtent. And that we ſhould deſire this for God's honour, and for the good of others, who may be led by this to think well of that religion which produces theſe things, and to endeavour themſelves to follow it and to do the ſame; that we ſhould be willing to be ſeen; that honour ſhould be the effect, but this not to ourſelves: this is one inſtance of the perfection of our Saviour's rules and of his religion.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE III.

THE HUNGRY SOUL FILLED.

MATTHEW v. 6.

Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

DISC. III.

THIS is one of those blessings, with which our Saviour begins his sermon upon the mount. And, because it is such an one, as deserves very much to be considered, I shall first endeavour to shew you, what *that righteousness* is, which our Saviour says, it is blessed to desire, or to hunger and thirst after it. Then, secondly,

DISC. III. I ſhall ſhew in what manner, and by what means, this hunger and thirſt, this earneſt deſire after righteouſneſs will be filled.

And 1ſt. I ſhall ſhew what that righteouſneſs is, which our Saviour ſays it is bleſſed to deſire with the greateſt earneſtneſs, or to hunger and thirſt after it.

We ſhall underſtand better what this is, if we conſider the other bleſſings that are mentioned before it. For what agrees beſt with thoſe, and ſeems to be moſt in one and the ſame ſpirit, that we ſhall have reaſon to think is the true meaning in this place. Now, our Saviour had declared thoſe firſt to be bleſſed that are "poor in ſpirit;" *i. e.* poor in their affections, and in their choice; "for theirs is the kingdom "of heaven." Then "thoſe, who mourn" for their own ſins or great misfortunes; "for they "ſhall be comforted." Then, "bleſſed are the "meek;" *i. e.* they who are humble, who ſtrive not

not for the beſt places in this world; "for they "ſhall inherit the earth." That is, they ſhall have another world hereafter, of which they ſhall be maſters; or, they ſhall enjoy even this world more than others, by their humility, and in patience poſſeſſing themſelves. Then follows the bleſſing in my text; "Bleſſed are they, "which do hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs; "for they ſhall be filled." Now we may ſee from what is before, or from the bleſſings of thoſe, who moſt of all are without deſire of worldly things, worldly happineſs, or worldly honour; we may ſee from this, as well as from the expreſſion itſelf, that to hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs muſt mean not only to have a very ſtrong and earneſt deſire, but to have a deſire of this above all other things. For they, who are ſaid to be bleſſed before, have no other deſires, or not in any degree, for they are poor by choice. They do not rejoice to live in pleaſures, but delight themſelves, if we may ſo ſay, in mourning for their ſins, or great and real

DISC. III.

DISC. III. misfortunes. They are not proud, nor very much desirous of worldly honours. We must think, therefore, that our Saviour says in this place, blessed are they, who, above all other things, desire righteousness, and who, instead of all other things, long after, or hunger and thirst after this; *i. e.* desire it in the highest degree; for they shall be filled. But what then is meant by righteousness? What is the true sense and the true understanding of it in this place? When we consider what is said before, or the spirit in which our Saviour speaks, or that his blessings fall upon those, who least of all are pleased with this world, or least of all in a worldly manner; we may well think, that the meaning is, blessed are they, who being in this world, and seeing its vanity and sinfulness, have their most earnest or only desire after another world, which is better than this; that new heaven and new earth, in which righteousness will dwell. They, who can say as the Psalmist does; "As the hart "desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul "after thee, O God! My soul hath a desire "and

" and longing to enter into thy courts. O that DISC.
" I had wings like a dove; for then would I III.
" flee away, and be at reſt!" It is likely, from what is ſaid before, that this is meant by righteouſneſs; eſpecially becauſe it is moſt natural to thoſe who wiſh for goodneſs, to wiſh to ſee it and to enjoy it, where it is in the higheſt degree. And, as this was the great object which our Saviour began to ſet before us, when he preached that " the kingdom of heaven was at hand;" and his doctrine is ſaid to be the doctrine of the kingdom which was to come; *i. e.* of a better ſtate, and greater degree of goodneſs, to be begun here on earth, and to be accompliſhed and perfected in heaven; it is likely that this is our Saviour's meaning, becauſe it agrees with his bleſſings before this; becauſe it agrees with all his preaching, which was to ſet before us another world, or another better and happier ſtate; and becauſe this is the moſt natural wiſh or deſire in the world, that any one can have. But it is moſt natural of all, and unavoidable

DISC. III.

to thoſe who are the beſt, or the moſt deſirous of goodneſs. For in that other world, if we are perfect or good ourſelves, we ſhall have the moſt proper company. Or, if we deſire or love goodneſs, more or greater than we have, then, in that other world, we ſhall ſee it, and ſhall rejoice in the perfection of others; for in that world there is no pride or contempt of others in thoſe who are above; nor any diſcontent or envy in thoſe who are below. This deſire, therefore, of another world, where righteouſneſs will dwell, and the deſire of it for that reaſon, and that we may be delivered from the ſin and imperfection which are here, is ſo natural to a good mind, that as one cannot be good or deſire goodneſs in the higheſt degree, ſo as to hunger and thirſt after it; we cannot, I ſay, do this, but we muſt, at the ſame time, wiſh and long for that ſtate in which righteouſneſs and goodneſs will be moſt perfect; ſo neither can we deſire or long for this, for a general happy ſtate and condition of others, a general

practice

practice of goodneſs and freedom from ſin, without deſiring firſt of all, and moſt earneſtly, to be free from ſin ourſelves, and to poſſeſs all virtue and all goodneſs. For, if we would deſire to ſee this in others, ſo far as to hunger and thirſt after it, or to long for it as our ſecret happineſs; if we would think it an happineſs to ſee and to live with the beſt of men that ever have been; we muſt neceſſarily deſire and earneſtly wiſh to be free from ſin ourſelves as far as poſſible, to poſſeſs that goodneſs, thoſe virtues and graces, which we think it would be our greateſt happineſs to ſee in others. For, if in others theſe things themſelves delight and pleaſe us, we cannot but deſire and long to poſſeſs them ourſelves, as much as we long or deſire to ſee them in others. For goodneſs beſides is an inward thing, and cannot be ſeen, but where it is felt; nor could we enjoy happineſs from ſuch company, from the converſation of ſaints and angels, or the ſight and preſence of God himſelf, if we are not in our inward tempers, ſuited DISC. III.

DISC. III. and prepared for them; nor ſhall we indeed think of ſuch an happineſs as this, if we are not, by a real deſire of goodneſs, prepared for it. Therefore, I ſay, that when our Saviour ſays, "Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after "righteouſneſs;" if he means, thoſe who, ſeeing nothing in this world, that can ſatisfy their deſires and notions of happineſs and goodneſs, "hunger and thirſt," or "pant as the hart af-"ter water brooks, after that righteouſneſs" which is free from ſin, and perfect in another world; if this is what our Saviour means firſt (as his way is to preſent his object full and perfect; for ſo he preaches, and propoſes not only private happineſs, but a kingdom or a ſtate of happineſs and goodneſs in another world) yet ſtill it is plain, as I have ſaid, that he means, at the ſame time, that they are bleſſed, who, mourning for their own ſins, at leaſt as much as for the ſins of others, and not being ſatisfied with any imperfect degree of virtue or goodneſs, which they think they now have, long and thirſt after

after a more real and perfect righteouſneſs; to be free from all their faults, and to be poſſeſſed of the moſt real temper and ſpirit of goodneſs and virtue itſelf; and not in any reſpect of the appearance only; who, "forgetting thoſe things "which are behind," being covetous in theſe things, and not content with ſhort attainments, reach forward unto what is before them, and "preſs towards the mark," as St. Paul ſays, "for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus;" by which he ſeems to mean not ſo much the reward as the righteouſneſs or degree of goodneſs itſelf, to which we are called by God in Chriſt. I ſay our Saviour means that we ſhould hunger and thirſt after this; and that we ſhould deſire and long after this, above, or inſtead of, all other things. Since this he ſpeaks of, as what we ſhould deſire; and all other things he has taught us *not* to deſire, *i. e.* not the riches, nor the joys or pleaſures, nor the pride or honours, of this world. Since in the beginning he has declared thoſe to be bleſ- DISC. III.

ſed,

DISC. III. fed, who have no desire of these, who willingly are poor; those, who content themselves with mourning; those, who are not concerned for the pride or honours of this world.

We see by this, it is not a small or weak desire and love of goodness or righteousness that our Saviour requires. He here informs us, that however great our desire is of this kind, however high our notions are of goodness and true happiness, they shall be filled or satisfied: we shall not be disappointed, at least not in the world to come: we shall find things there at least great as our desire or above it. But shall we be satisfied in this world? Or can we expect that by Christ's blessing, his favour and assistance, we can obtain and arrive at such goodness as we may desire? Or ought we not rather still to desire greater attainments, and to struggle against the various temptations of the world, and our own imperfections; endeavouring sincerely to do the best, and never to give up this most important point; but,

but, if we cannot attain to ſuch virtue and good- DISC. III.
neſs as we ought to deſire, yet ſtill to continue ſincerely to deſire, and to hunger and thirſt after it? Thus, by the precept in the text, we are not only to deſire that righteouſneſs, which can only be perfect and fully accompliſhed in another world; but we are to make a beginning here; we are to aim at, to *hunger and thirst after*, that degree of righteouſneſs, that an imperfect nature is at preſent capable of. But this will be the ſubject of another diſcourſe.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IV.

THE HUNGRY SOUL FILLED.

MATTHEW v. 6.

Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

DISC. IV. IN my former discourse on these words, I said we should understand the meaning of them better, and what disposition and state of mind that is which our Saviour blesses, by considering what those other dispositions are, which he declares to be blessed, and shews his approbation of, before this: for it is likely that this will agree with them, and be in the same spirit. He had before declared those to be blessed, who, if they

are

are poor, are content to be ſo; or, if they are rich, do not value riches; "for theirs is the "kingdom of God." Bleſſed are they, who do not *love* pleaſures or worldly joy, but who mourn for ſin or real unhappineſs; "for they ſhall be "comforted." Their ſorrow itſelf is ſweet, if it is ſuch as our Saviour means. "Bleſſed are the "meek;" by which it is probable are meant the humble; (for poor in ſpirit are they who are not only poor in worldly things, but willing to be ſo) bleſſed are they, who are humble; who do not ſtrive for the beſt places, but are content with that condition in which God has placed them; "for they ſhall inherit the earth:" the other world ſhall be theirs: they ſhall be heirs of it and great in it: and this world they ſhall enjoy better by poſſeſſing and commanding their deſires. Then, after this, follows, "Bleſſed are they, "which do hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs; "for they ſhall be filled." And, if we conſider, that what is ſaid before is in oppoſition to worldly riches, and to worldly joy or pleaſure, DISC. IV.

and

DISC. IV. and to worldly honours, we ſhall underſtand that our Saviour means here, that we ſhould turn our deſires from all other and worldly things *to his righteousness;* or that he ſays in the whole together, Bleſſed are they, who, not deſiring riches, nor pleaſures, nor honours, but content, or chooſing to be poor, content and ſatisfied to mourn for their ſins or great unhappineſs; and who, having no deſire of any other ſtate in the world, than that in which they are, have another deſire and want, and ambition very ſtrong; who may be ſaid "to hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs;" and we are to underſtand plainly from what our Saviour ſays, that this deſire not only ought to be ſtrong and earneſt, but it ſhould be inſtead of other deſires, and that other deſires ought to be turned into this as much as poſſible; at leaſt that this ought to be the maſter paſſion, or concern above all others. But what are we to underſtand by righteouſneſs? Or is this ſufficiently underſtood what it is, without any explaining? I obſerved in my laſt diſcourſe that our Saviour might

might mean by this word, and firſt of all, not righteouſneſs itſelf as our own part; but as it is more perfect in another ſtate; that, therefore, he meant, bleſſed are they, who hunger and thirſt for that other world, in which righteouſneſs dwells. So that this would be the ſame as the kingdom of heaven, and the goodneſs and happineſs that is there; "for they ſhall be filled;" all their deſires ſhall be ſatisfied and anſwered. But, though this is the higheſt object of all deſire, and though the deſire of righteouſneſs muſt end in this, to deſire it, where it is moſt perfect, yet it may not begin with this. And, it is probable, that the firſt meaning is, that "they are bleſſed, who "hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs" in this life; who deſire, firſt of all, to do all their own duty, and to be as perfect as poſſible, and then to ſee others to do the ſame or more; and in this deſire our Saviour ſays, we ſhall not be diſappointed, as we may in other things. If we deſire riches or pleaſure, or worldly greatneſs or pride, all theſe things may fail; but if we deſire righ- DISC. IV.

teouſneſs

DISC. IV. teouſneſs for ourſelves and others, in this we ſhall be filled and ſatisfied fully, and to our heart's deſire; which, however, can only be in another world.

But there is a ſtate in this life, that is accepted with God; when we deſire earneſtly ourſelves to be good, and are not able to come up to what we deſire; and this is always ſo. And for others, we cannot expect to ſee righteouſneſs and goodneſs prevail ſo generally, as every good man muſt wiſh: (and even many of thoſe who are not good) ſo that the bleſſing to this deſire, or the full accompliſhment be deferred till another life; though ſome good we ſhall ſee among others, and great good perhaps: and in ourſelves it is our own fault if we do not improve or increaſe in knowledge, and in our duty, when we have ſuch encouragement from the reward propoſed, and from the aſſiſtance promiſed, and all the motives and arguments with which we are ſupplied in the ſcripture;

and

and when we know that it is required that we should go on, and grow, and that we should perfect or increaſe our holineſs in the fear of God. DISC. IV.

But if this is meant, that we deſire and earneſtly wiſh for righteouſneſs, for true goodneſs, ſuch as God will approve, and requires both for ourſelves and others in this life; that we are firſt of all to take care for ourſelves, then afterwards for others, as much as poſſible, or as much as becomes us, and, at leaſt, to deſire the utmoſt good of all; what will be moſt uſeful now will be to conſider *what* is that righteouſneſs and goodneſs, which God approves and requires, and which is ſpoken of ſo often in the Old and New Teſtament by this name. For righteouſneſs is the name or word, that is uſed more than any other, to ſignify that ſtate of mind, and that way of life, which is moſt approved of in ſcripture, and that whole duty from us, which God requires. For this was the name

DISC. IV. from the beginning for what God approves and requires moſt from men. And, therefore, of Noah God himſelf ſays, that he was *righteous*; and that, for that reaſon, he would ſave him from the judgment and puniſhment which he was then bringing upon others; which is this excellent thing, which God himſelf will approve, and which he requires from us, and therefore teaches us to value it for ourſelves, above all other things; which he teaches us "to hunger and thirſt after;" which implies that we ſhould continually preſs after it, as a thing in which we may improve. What is the beginning of it, or the main and principal thing, which we ſhould firſt of all endeavour to poſſeſs? It will be of great ſervice to us to underſtand this rightly. For, though we cannot deſire this, till we have it already in ſome degree; yet it will be a great advantage to us, to know what it is; that we may like the things, that are the beſt and moſt excellent; and, knowing the right way, may continue to walk and to improve in it. Now what

what I would ſay is this, and I ſhall dwell a little upon it, that you may take notice of it the more; though it is what we all know, but do not enough conſider. What is meant by righteouſneſs moſt properly in the ſcripture is *religion*; and becauſe there are other reaſons and motives from which men may do right things; as from a deſire of the good opinion of men, or for our own worldly intereſt, we may do many things that in themſelves are good, and forbear and abſtain from what is ill; yet, according to the ſcriptures, the righteous man, *i. e.* he, who is beſt ſpoken of and moſt allowed and approved, is that man, who has, firſt of all, a ſenſe and an acknowledgement of God; and who, from a ſenſe of his duty, from the fear of God or regard to him, does all his duty to men; who from this principle takes the greateſt care to be juſt and merciful to men; becauſe he has learned that theſe are ſacrifices, this is the ſervice to him, by which God is well pleaſed; and who takes care to do them from this principle; and becauſe this is DISC. IV.

DISC. IV.

that quality that gives the true value to all his works; who takes care to improve this in his mind; to acknowledge God, and all his goodneſs and power, and to ſerve him in every thing. This is that righteouſneſs which our Saviour means, and which is meant continually in all the ſcripture. You will ſee every where that duty to God is the firſt thing, and that the righteous man is ſo deſcribed always, as he who performs all his duty and ſervice to God *firſt*; who, therefore, is conſtant in thinking of God, as being always with him, and as being his lord and maſter, and God whom he is to ſerve. Therefore, he does whatever God requires and has ordained. And, therefore, you may ſee that obſerving God's ordinances is always joined or underſtood in the Old Teſtament as a part of righteouſneſs and goodneſs. For thus, ſays the Lord, according to the prophet Iſaiah, "Keep "ye judgment and do juſtice, or righteouſneſs; "for my ſalvation is near to come, and my righ- "teouſneſs to be revealed. Bleſſed is the man

"that

" that doeth this, and the ſon of man that DISC.
" layeth hold of it; that keepeth the ſabbath IV.
" from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from
" doing any evil." Where you ſee that keeping the ordinances of God, and not doing ill, are joined together. And ſo it is now under the goſpel. Whatever ordinances there are now continued, as that of the ſabbath is, and public prayer and aſſembling of ourſelves together, and ſacraments, theſe are to be performed; and love, juſtice, charity, every duty is to be performed towards men. In this righteouſneſs and true goodneſs we are to increaſe, to deſire it above all other things, to hunger and to thirſt after it. And, therefore, we muſt begin firſt with the knowledge of God, of his mercies and his benefits to us. We muſt endeavour to think of him as being preſent with us, and that we live in his preſence: or more than this, that he is within us and around us. From ſuch a thought and knowledge of God we ſhall find the greateſt benefit in all our concerns, the greateſt comfort,

DISC. IV.

and the beſt direction of all our thoughts and actions. In this, therefore, we muſt endeavour to improve inwardly, and to be more and more ſenſible that God is around us and within us.

Then, from this principle, we muſt proceed in our actions to prayer and thankſgiving, or our duty to him firſt of all; to our ſpeaking well of him, or with devotion and reverence upon every occaſion; then, from the ſame principle, to do all our duties to men, to ourſelves, to our families. So that you may perceive that this righteouſneſs or goodneſs will not be inconſiſtent with, or an hindrance to, any thing that is required of us, but the ſtrongeſt and moſt powerful motive to every thing that is our duty. If, above all other things, we deſire to be in this ſtate and diſpoſition of mind, and to be able to perform all our duty that God requires, then this deſire ſhall be ſatisfied,

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE V.

THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS FULFILLED.

MATTHEW v. 17, 18.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For, verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

THESE words will afford very great and useful inſtruction, as they will be found to contain both what Chriſt hath done for us, and what is expected to be done by Chriſtians, or by thoſe who ſhall be ſaved by Chriſt, and enter into the

DISC. V. kingdom of heaven, when it ſhall be made perfect hereafter at the coming of Chriſt. They are the beginning of our Saviour's explanation of the law, or of the duties required by God; which he fully teaches in the remaining part of this chapter and the two following: and indeed all the precepts which we read here are as pure and ſtrict as they are ſweet and good, entering into the very ſecrets and inmoſt deſires of the heart; that we may well wonder there ſhould be any, that thought our Saviour came to "*destroy* the "law and the prophets;" or why he ſhould ſo ſpeak in the beginning of this his ſermon, as if there were any reaſon for ſuch an opinion of him. But there were ſome who thought ſo of Chriſt. The Scribes and Phariſees, who were men of an outward religion, and who boaſted of their works and ſtrict obſervance of the law;—they had ſeen that our bleſſed Saviour came not with that *outward* ſtrictneſs which they themſelves profeſſed, or which John the Baptiſt had; that "he came eating and drinking;" *i. e.* not with outward

outward ſtrictneſs, or differing from others in things that were innocent; that "he ſat down to "meat with publicans and ſinners;" thoſe whom the Scribes and Phariſees deteſted. They had ſeen that he ſuffered his diſciples "to rub the ears "of corn in their hands on the ſabbath day; "and that he healed a man whoſe hand was "withered on the ſabbath. He did not command his diſciples to faſt (as the Scribes and Phariſees did) becauſe he thought they were not then fit to bear ſuch precepts, or rightly to practiſe them, though they would be afterwards. For theſe reaſons they might think he came "to de-"ſtroy the law and the prophets," and to looſe men from the ſtrict obſervations, which they were under by the law of Moſes. And, indeed, our Saviour did come to leſſen this burden, or to make it eaſier to be borne in all reſpects. He invited thoſe, "who laboured and were heavy "laden, to come to him, and he would give "them reſt." He told them "that his yoke was "eaſy and his burden light." He ſaid that "the

DISC. V.

"Scribes

DISC. V. "Scribes and Phariſees laid heavy burdens upon "men's ſhoulders, which they themſelves would "not touch with one of their fingers:" all that they had added to the law of God by their tradition he took away, and the ceremonies and outward rites, which God himſelf had commanded, theſe he did intend to take away afterward, from thoſe who were not Jews and born under them, as we find afterwards in St. Paul's preaching; and the moral duties and commandments were to be made by him eaſier to be fulfilled. But how was this to be? Was it by leſſening the precepts, or explaining them leſs ſtrictly than the Scribes or Phariſees did? This we find was quite otherwiſe. For they, who were ſtrict in requiring obedience to their own ordinances and traditions, had, indeed, explained away the law and commandments of God; and did not underſtand them in their ſpiritual and true ſenſe. And our Saviour, we ſee afterwards in theſe chapters, gives the law and the commandments of God in their full ſenſe. Yet ſtill it was true, "that his yoke

"was

" was eaſy, and his burden light." For he preached forgiveneſs to the greateſt ſinners, upon their repentance; and he promiſed the Holy Spirit to make their duty, though more ſtrictly required, yet more eaſy to be performed. He did not, therefore, come, though his doctrine was love, and peace, and forgiveneſs, and ſounded ſo ſweetly in the ears of ſinners;—he did not come " to deſtroy the law and the prophets, but " to fulfil them."

DISC. V.

For let us obſerve how ſtrictly our Saviour ſpeaks; " till heaven and earth paſs away, one " jot or one tittle ſhall not paſs away, till all be " fulfilled. Whoſoever, therefore, ſhall break " one of theſe leaſt commandments, and ſhall " teach men ſo, ſhall be the leaſt in the kingdom " of heaven. But, whoſoever ſhall do and teach " them, he ſhall be called great in the kingdom " of heaven. For I ſay unto you, that, except " your righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the righteouſ- " neſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in

" no

DISC. V. "no wiſe enter into the kingdom of heaven." Though the Scribes and Phariſees make ſuch appearance of holineſs in their outward actions, yet if ye do not, in the inward deſire of your hearts, fulfil the law of God better than they do, ye ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

There is great mercy, forgiveneſs, peace, and love in the goſpel; and yet you ſee there is great *ſtrictness* too: for thoſe are words, which we muſt well take notice of;—"till heaven and earth paſs "away, one jot or one tittle ſhall not paſs from "the law, till all be fulfilled: and, whoſoever "ſhall break one of theſe leaſt precepts, and "teach men ſo," (either by doctrine or example) "he ſhall be leaſt in the kingdom of heaven;" he ſhall, in no wiſe, enter into it.

I ſhall, therefore, now recollect what are the favours and the mercies of the goſpel, and ſhew how every one of them plainly is intended to make ſin more inexcuſable, and to teach Chriſtians

tians what degree of holineſs and goodneſs is required of them. DISC. V.

Firſt of all, the goſpel requires men to repent, and, upon repentance and a real purpoſe of amendment of life, accompanied with faith unfeigned, has promiſed a full and perfect forgiveneſs of ſins for Chriſt's ſake. Now it is plain, from the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, that this forgiveneſs of what is paſt cannot be intended to encourage any to *continue* in their ſins. When a father ſees reaſon to forgive a diſobedient ſon, and to take him to the ſame favour and love in which he was before, this is not done to encourage him to continue in diſobedience, or to begin again to offend him. But it is firſt of all that he might not be diſcouraged, or without hope of recovering the affection of his father, and by deſpair, be driven to greater degrees of wickedneſs and diſobedience. The forgiveneſs is intended as an encouragement to bring him to his duty again. To a good mind favour and mercy ſhewn will be

DISC. V. be the greateſt encouragement to what is good. This is the argument, therefore, which the goſpel uſes: "I beſeech you, by the mercies of "God," ſaith St. Paul, "that ye preſent your-"ſelves a lively and holy ſacrifice unto God." And, when God is repreſented to us by the compariſon of a father forgiving his prodigal ſon, the mercy and kindneſs is indeed great, but founded upon the ſon's repentance; and it is, plainly, with hopes that the ſon, from that time, will amend, and continue in his duty. "For this my "ſon," ſaith the father, "was dead, and is alive "again; was loſt, and is found." We ought to conceive and underſtand the greateſt mercy and forgiveneſs in the goſpel; for ſo it is repreſented. Forgiveneſs and mercy are promiſed and declared to the greateſt ſinners, but promiſed and declared upon their repentance and faith: and the forgiveneſs of God is made the argument, the reaſon, why we ſhould love and ſerve him. And for this reaſon it is ſaid, that they, who ſin under the goſpel, will be thought worthy of greater puniſhment,

punishment, as sinning against mercy and against the love of God shewn to them so plainly. "For, if he, who sinned against the law of "Moses," which came with terror, and was not so gracious, so mild, as the gospel is, yet could expect no mercy, "of how much sorer "punishment shall he be thought worthy, who "hath counted the blood of the covenant, "wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, "and done despite to the spirit of grace?

DISC. V.

Another favour and abatement of the gospel is this, that it has released men from burthensome rites, such as the Jews were subject to, and taught us wherein true righteousness and goodness consists; viz. in the love of God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and our neighbour as ourselves. It does not require costly sacrifices, but the offering of our hearts. It does not consist in outward washings, but in inward cleanness and purity of the soul. Now we are not to suppose, that those outward sacrifices

DISC. V.

crifices and ceremonies, when required by God, were not intended for good; but were deſigned to teach men their duty to God; to teach them that inward holineſs and goodneſs, which now, without them, are required of Chriſtians. It was ſuitable to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God to try men by every means. And firſt he began in that way of teaching, by rites and ceremonies, which had a good effect with ſome, but with many it was the means to hinder them from coming to the true meaning and intention, while they ſtopped and ſatisfied themſelves in the outward ceremony. It was, indeed, impoſſible that religion at any time, ſhould be without *ſome* outward action or ceremony: without ſome action, ſome outward manner or rite, there can be no public worſhip of God. And ſome ceremonies, even under the goſpel, God thought fit to appoint, and to enjoin to Chriſtians; viz. the two ſacraments of Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper. But theſe, as they are the moſt ſignificant and the moſt inſtructive, ſo they are in themſelves

themſelves the moſt decent and eaſily to be performed. Now the more we are releaſed from ſmaller and outward things, yet more it is required, that we ſhould know in what the *true* righteouſneſs and goodneſs of a Chriſtian conſiſts. When, under the law of Moſes, or under the former covenants of God, men were unwilling to offer up themſelves and their affections to God, they thought to excuſe themſelves by offering ſacrifices in their ſtead; when they were unclean in heart and mind, they were careful in outward waſhings, and in the appearances of inward holineſs and purity. But Chriſtians, if they are not *really* good, do nothing, and have nothing to pretend or ſhew, inſtead of virtue and goodneſs. DISC. V.

Since God has releaſed us from outward ceremonies, there is the more reaſon that we ſhould perform what he requires; that we ſhould "love "juſtice and mercy, and walk humbly with "God;" with ſubmiſſion and obedience to him in all the actions of our lives.

DISC. V.

Thus it appears, that the goſpel of Chriſt is intended to bring us to the greateſt degree of holineſs and goodneſs, by the means of mercy, forgiveneſs, abatement, and favour. And, for theſe reaſons, we ought to conſider what our duty is, and to remember how ſtrictly it will be required. The more mercy is ſhewn, the greater will be our guilt, if mercy and goodneſs cannot move us: and we muſt remember beſides, that one great privilege and bleſſing of the goſpel is that of God's grace and ſpirit, to enable us to overcome our difficulties, and to give us peace, contentment, and joy, in the ways of righteouſneſs and goodneſs. They will be given, our Saviour ſays, to thoſe who pray for them. "For "which of you," ſays he, "that is a father, if "his ſon ſhall aſk of him bread, will he give him "a ſtone; or, if he aſk a fiſh, will he for a fiſh "give him a ſerpent; or, if he aſk an egg, will "he offer him a ſcorpion? If ye then, being "evil," ſays he, "know how to give good gifts "unto your children, how much more ſhall your "heavenly

DISC. V.

" heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them " that aſk him?" Now this, as it is the greateſt bleſſing, ſo it is plainly the greateſt encouragement to all holineſs and goodneſs. For, ſince God has promiſed his Holy Spirit, we know that the goodneſs he requires is practicable; for this reaſon we can have no excuſe to continue in ſin. But we muſt pray to God to give us a better mind, to give us his Spirit, the beſt and greateſt of all bleſſings; and, with this, we muſt uſe faithfully and truly our own endeavours; we muſt improve the talents and the bleſſings that God gives; we muſt avoid ſlothfulneſs; we muſt do our duty honeſtly and induſtriouſly in the world. Our duty to God is beſt performed, while we do our duty to men *conſcientiouſly* and for *his* ſake. This is one thing, that ſhews the reaſonableneſs of that religion, that duty which God requires of Chriſtians. The more reaſonable it is, the more ſtrictly will it be required, as we may learn from our Saviour's own words; " Think " not, that I am come to deſtroy the law

DISC. V.

" and the prophets; I am not come to deſtroy, " but to fulfil." And, " Except your righteouſ- " neſs ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes " and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no wiſe enter into " the kingdom of heaven." We ſhould, there- fore, be careful, and, as the ſcripture exhorts, " be ſteadfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in " the work of the Lord; foraſmuch as we know " that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

DISCOURSE VI.

WORLDLY ANXIETY FORBIDDEN.

MATTHEW VI. 19, 20, 21.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

DISC. VI.

THE temper, which our Saviour approves and chooſes for his diſciples, and the laws and rules, which he requires of them, are ſuch as are moſt

DISC. VI.

worthy and ſuitable to that kingdom of God, or of heaven, which he preached; and, though they are above, and different from the common notions of happineſs, and the common meaſures of what is thought our duty, yet both his temper and his ſpirit, if we can be truly poſſeſſed of them, would make us happy even in this life; and his precepts would lead to real happineſs *now*; and they are not inconſiſtent with any thing that we ourſelves judge reaſonable or beſt: for, if it tends to God's honour more to defend ourſelves without paſſion, as, when our Saviour himſelf was ſtricken injuriouſly, he ſaid, "If I have ſpoken evil, bear "witneſs of the evil; but, if well, why ſmiteſt "thou me;" in ſuch a manner, and with ſuch temper, we may and ought to defend ourſelves; and when he, who aſks us any thing, is ſuch and ſo diſpoſed, that to give will do him no good and ſerve no good purpoſe, we may and ought to refuſe it. For then another rule of our Saviour will take place, that excellent rule of moral prudence and wiſdom; "Throw not that which is

"holy

" holy to the dogs, nor caſt ye your pearls before " ſwine, leſt they trample the things under their " feet, and turn again and rent you:" for though this is ſpoken of *divine* things, that they ſhould not be thrown out to the unworthy; and, though the things, which we can give or refuſe to thoſe who aſk, are worldly and of leſs conſequence; yet every thing is holy, and divine, and ſerious, in the uſe and conſequence of it; and Chriſtianity, the ſpirit and doctrine of Chriſt, it may be truly ſaid, is not ſcrupulous; not confined to the very words and letter of the precept; but, as our Saviour himſelf has ſaid, that " the ſab- " bath was made for man, and not man for the " ſabbath;" ſo, in all other caſes (except when the things themſelves are abſolutely ſinful, and can never be done) what is reaſonable and beſt, and the moſt for the honour of *God*, not of ourſelves, that ought to determine. For the deſign of the goſpel is abſolutely and perfectly for the good of men; and it gives ſuch rules and precepts, as are the beſt and fitteſt to promote their DISC. VI.

DISC. VI.

real and trueſt good. In caſes, therefore, when the good is otherwiſe, then, according to the precept, (as if good is to be done upon the ſabbath day) then the force of the particular precept ceaſes: we are free from that precept, but ſubject to the general one, that the trueſt and greateſt good, and what is moſt for God's honour, (judging this ſtrictly and conſcientiouſly) that is to be done. Upon this principle we ſee that the moſt difficult of theſe precepts were right and ſuitable to him to give; when it was not deſigned that they ſhould always, according to the very words, but in the trueſt and beſt meaning, be obſerved.

But of this command, which I have read to you at preſent, there is very little difficulty to ſee, that it was moſt reaſonable for him, who taught and declared to men a kingdom of heaven, to require that we ſhould not ſet our hearts upon this world, and that we ſhould not have ſuch a love, or ſuch a deſire of other things, as is inconſiſtent with the deſire of that which is propoſed

poſed to us. It is plain that this is reaſonable; and that, therefore, we ſhould "not lay up for "ourſelves treaſures on earth;" for a treaſure ſuppoſes that it is a thing which we *love*; and, therefore, when we have laid them up, our Saviour concludes that we cannot be indifferent about them; but that, "where our treaſure is, "there our heart will be alſo." If, therefore, the riches of this world are things that are very different from what we expect or hope for in heaven and in another world; ſo far, that it is plain to every one, that they are of no uſe *there*; if they are only different things, and not oppoſite and contrary; yet there is a plain reaſon, that our Saviour ſhould require, that we ſhould not *love* them; and that we ſhould have our minds and our affections, as little as poſſible, employed about them. The reaſon is, that he would have us live by one rule, and by one principle, and that he would have this to be clear, and, as much as poſſible, without any thing to interfere or to interrupt it. For that principle or judgment of what

DISC. VI. what is beſt and happieſt for us, upon which we live, is to the mind, what the eye is to body. It directs and governs the mind in all its actions and affections, as the eye directs the body. If this eye, therefore, is clear; if it has no mote or beam, and is not darkened, nor has it's light hidden or ſtopped by any thing elſe that comes acroſs it, we ſhall go on well: if any other principle, notion, or maxim, comes and ſtops this light, then we are ſo long in darkneſs: for this is his doctrine, that the only thing, which is like the eye to the body, the only thing that is clear and pleaſing and directing to the mind, is that faith and hope, that ſees farther than the things of this world; that pure eye that ſees things that are inviſible, that conceives a better and purer happineſs reſerved for us; and (though there are other principles, for whatever judgment we have of what is beſt and happieſt for us, *that* is our principle, and, whatever it is, it will govern and direct us in it's way, and to it's purpoſes, and perhaps more ſteadily and clearly

clearly, and with leſs interruption, than the light and hope of heaven can direct others; "for the children of this world are in their "generation," or upon their principle, and in their way, "wiſer than the children of light;" than thoſe, whom only our Saviour will allow to have true light) yet all this is darkneſs according to our Saviour: the light itſelf, that directs us, though it may ſee ſharply and clearly, yet becauſe it ſhews us nothing that is good, this "light itſelf is darkneſs," as our Saviour ſays. He would have us, therefore, live by one principle, chooſing the beſt, the only one, that leads to happineſs, and lay up for ourſelves our treaſures, place all our affections, imagine every thing that is deſirable, and gain our intereſt, in heaven. We ſhould not have two objects, two different things to place our affections upon: (for ſo, if theſe different things are inconſiſtent or contrary, it is plain that we cannot long love both, but we muſt "love one and hate the other;" or, if they are only different, we ſhall "hold to the "one

DISC. VI.

DISC. VI.

"one, and deſpiſe," or neglect, "the other." And, therefore, "we cannot ſerve God and mam-"mon," as two maſters and two principles) we cannot ſerve God and the world in the ſame ſenſe, and as loving both for themſelves; or deſire heaven and this world, both for themſelves: for by this means we ſhall deſire neither effectually nor ſufficiently even for a worldly purpoſe: for the world itſelf will require to be ſerved entirely, and with all our affection. But we may ſerve both, if we will have only one maſter, one thing that is principal, and ſerve and regard the other, only ſo far as is allowed or even required: for it may be, that God himſelf may have placed us in a condition, in which we are obliged to labour, and take pains for worldly things. He has placed every one in this world in ſuch a manner, that he, who is freeſt from all men, the leaſt engaged in all reſpects, ſhall, however, be the ſervant of all, obliged from duty's ſake to ſerve and to regard the world more than others; as the Apoſtle ſays of himſelf, that he was. So it is,

that

that oppoſite things will agree; when there is order at home, and when the mind itſelf is ſettled right by having only one principal view, to which every thing elſe will be ſubſervient. Then it is, that the ſame perſon can labour and take pains in worldly things, can be moſt ſaving and induſtrious for the little affairs of this world, and yet not regard them too much. He may have his mind entirely fixed upon other things, and all his treaſure and all his hopes in heaven, and yet take great and real pains for this world's goods; becauſe he has a family that he is to provide for; becauſe his own condition requires it; or becauſe it is the buſineſs in which he is placed. It is only neceſſary, that his eye ſhould be clear, that he ſhould ſee and be ſenſible of what is truly good, and that nothing elſe ſhould interfere. He muſt be *busy* about worldly things, but he muſt not *love* them. He muſt think only that they are the proper means and ſubject, in which he is to do his *duty*. It is of this that our Saviour always and every where takes ſo much care, that DISC. VI.

we

DISC. VI.

we are to love God only, or with all our heart and mind; that we are to be careful only of one thing; that we muſt forſake all in our affections, (and in reality, if it is neceſſary) to follow him. And particularly he is always afraid of covetouſneſs, the love of worldly wealth, and what is valuable in the outward things of this world, as the dangerous enemy and the oppoſite to his ſpirit, to his kingdom of God and heaven: for how indeed can theſe things agree, and how can he have a true reliſh for thoſe ſpiritual things, of which our Saviour ſpeaks, who loves this earth and its groſs treaſures? It is impoſſible, he ſays, "that the rich man," *i. e.* as he again explains himſelf, that he, who *truſts* in riches, and *loves* them, that he "ſhould enter into the kingdom "of God." His firſt bleſſing is to thoſe who are poor in ſpirit; to thoſe who are poor by choice and in their affections, whether they are poor or rich, as to outward circumſtances. And "be-"ware," ſays he, to his diſciples, "of covetouſ-"neſs;" and then gives this clear reaſon againſt it;

it; "for a man's life conſiſteth not in the abun- DISC. VI.
"dance of the things which he poſſeſſes." Even in this life, if any are happy, it is not by riches that they are ſo; becauſe others are happy, who have them not. Nothing can ſhew more that his doctrine was pure and ſpiritual, or that himſelf deſigned the real and greateſt good of men, than this which runs through it in ſo remarkable a manner. And it was neceſſary, that he ſhould keep this up, and that he, who taught a divine and heavenly kingdom, ſhould always keep this in view, and ſhould every where guard ſo much againſt this enemy.

There will be no need of any thing more, to ſhew the reaſonableneſs, or the right view of what our Saviour ſays, after this, againſt all worldly care and concern, as it ſeems to be, and if it were to be taken ſtrictly, really too inconſiſtent with all proviſion and all buſineſs of this world. We muſt remember that he is abſolute in requiring that we ſhould have only *one* maſter

to

DISC. VI.

to ſerve; that we muſt have only one thing to be concerned for, for itſelf. It will be plain, that what he ſays, is indeed ſtrict, againſt anxiety, againſt all irreligious and ungodly care and concern for worldly things; or, in any other view, than as it is our duty, with confidence and reliance on God's goodneſs and providence, to be concerned for them. What ſeems to be more than this is, becauſe it was neceſſary and proper for him to ſpeak in the higheſt and moſt divine way. It ſuited his character and his doctrine, and as there was no danger he ſhould be miſunderſtood, he ſpeaks in this manner to give us a reliſh for his pure and ſpiritual views; not thinking that we can live ſo, or that it is required in the common conditions, though, perhaps, it was more ſtrictly and literally required of the Apoſtles, and of the firſt Chriſtians, when Chriſtianity itſelf was unſettled. It is becauſe we are bent too much to the ſide of worldly things, to bring us to be ſtrait, he bends to the other ſide. "Therefore, I ſay unto you, take

"no

" no thought, (*i. e.* no *anxious* thought) what DISC. VI.
" ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; nor
" yet for your body, what ye ſhall put on. Is
" not the life more than meat; and the body
" more than raiment?" It is not likely that God, who gave you life, will not give you what is neceſſary to preſerve it. " Obſerve," ſays he, " the fowls of the air; for they ſow not, " neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; " and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. " Are ye not much better than they?" And what great things can ye do by ſo much care? " Can " ye add one cubit to your ſtature? Why then " ſhould you take thought for raiment; and why " are you ſo anxious how you ſhall have it? " Conſider the common flowers of the field, how " they grow; they toil not, neither do they ſpin; " and yet I ſay unto you, that even Solomon in " all his glory was not arrayed like one of theſe. " Wherefore, if God ſo clothe the graſs of the " field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is caſt " into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe

DISC. VI.

"you? Therefore, *be not anxious*, ſaying, what "ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink, or where-"withal ſhall we be clothed; for after all theſe "things do the Gentiles ſeek; for your heavenly "Father knoweth, that ye have need of all theſe "things. But ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God "and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall "be added unto you. Be not, therefore, anxious "for the morrow; for the morrow will take care "for the things of itſelf: ſufficient unto the day "is the evil thereof." What we are to learn from theſe words, which are ſo ſweet and divine, but plainly above common life; (only it is plain that our Saviour regards even our *preſent* happineſs, as when he gives a reaſon againſt care, that it doubles the evils of life, and makes us more miſerable than it is neceſſary we ſhould be) what we are to learn from them is this in general; that *all anxiety* about worldly things is indeed as ſinful, as it is unworthy of thoſe who have greater and better hopes. He does not condemn all care in a good ſenſe; ſuch a care as human means, with

with dependence and reliance upon God, and in duty to him, because he has made these means necessary. We must learn not only that the love of worldly things is sinful, but even anxiety for necessary things. We should learn, from what our Saviour says, the infinite and universal goodness and care of God over all his works; that, therefore, he will not neglect or forsake us. Then the rest of the scripture will teach us, not to forget, what we see ourselves, that for man, whom God has made capable of contriving and effecting things for himself, God does not provide for him without his industry, or without his using the faculties which he hath given. That, therefore, though our Saviour raised this doctrine of trust in God so high, yet an apostle, who spoke according to his will, and by his orders, has required the greatest and truest industry, with this principle, that Christians should be careful to maintain or to encourage good works; meaning plainly honest employments: "that he, who "will not work, neither should he eat."— DISC. VI.

DISC. VI. Thus it is that these things agree. Our Saviour thought it proper to require the love of God, and trust in him first of all and in the highest degree. And it may be said that he trusted, as he well might, to his character, not to be mistaken at the time in things too strong, if taken in a literal sense; and that afterwards this would be guarded effectually by what his apostles should be directed to say. May this charming view of things, this prospect of heaven and happiness, which our Saviour has set before us, so wean us from the love of this world, of its empty pleasures, its vain pomps and unprofitable riches; that our affections may be chiefly fixed on things above; whither the forerunner is already entered for us, and hath already taken possession for all his true and faithful servants.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VII.

THE SERVICE OF GOD AND MAMMON NOT POSSIBLE TOGETHER.

MATTHEW VI. 24.

No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon.

DISC. VII.

AS theſe words, with all the reſt of this part of ſcripture, are very remarkable, and yet may ſeem to have a difficulty, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the reaſonableneſs or truth of this doctrine, that indeed it cannot be otherwiſe, and that it is not poſſible for us to ſerve well two ſuch maſters

DISC. VII. as God and mammon; that, therefore, the ſafer and happier way is not to endeavour it; then, afterwards, I ſhall make ſome remarks upon the remaining parts of this ſcripture, which is ſo excellent and divine to hear, and yet ſeems to have a difficulty, becauſe it is really above the common condition of this life.

And, firſt of all, it is not poſſible to ſerve two ſuch maſters as God and mammon, religion and the world, if they are not contrary, if they are only different; becauſe the mind of man is not capable of ſo much ſervice, and has not affections enough for two ſuch objects, of which either will require all the care and attention that we can beſtow. The affections and the capacities of men have limits; and either of theſe maſters will require, and one of them at leaſt deſerves, the greateſt that we can have: we cannot, therefore, afford to throw away that care and attention, and thoſe affections which are all required for one great purpoſe of religion; and which all together

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are ſhort and defective. The reaſon is plain, why it is, that ſo many, who are very ſenſible of other things, have yet but ſlight impreſſions of religion. The reaſon certainly is, that, when we fear men, and are anxious about what they will think, and what they will ſay of us, we have leſs fear of God, of his unerring judgment and his infinite power to ſave and to deſtroy. It is not that religion is not capable of affecting us in the ſtrongeſt degree, and more than every thing elſe; but the true reaſon is that, whilſt our minds are poſſeſſed with other thoughts and affections, there is no room for even the greateſt and higheſt things to have any poſſeſſion or effect upon us: and it ſhews us the neceſſity of managing the ability and the affections that we have, and of keeping them as much as poſſible for the beſt things; becauſe it either always is, or it may be, our care, that we have not affections and regards ſufficient to employ upon theſe things and upon others too. DISC. VII.

DISC. VII.

This, therefore, is one reaſon, why we cannot ſerve two maſters, even though they are not ſuppoſed to be contrary but only different; and it is one of the caſes, which our Saviour has ſuppoſed, in which it would not be neceſſary *to love* the one and hate the other, but it would be unavoidable to attend to the one with ſtronger attachment, and not to deſpiſe, or, in ſome degree, to neglect the other. Though it is not true that every degree of regard for worldly advantages or pleaſures is inconſiſtent with religion; yet certainly there is a degree of ſuch affections, which comes to be contrary or inconſiſtent with it. In this ſenſe God and the world are two *contrary* maſters, and not only different. If we love one in ſuch a degree, we muſt hate or be quite indifferent, or have a diſlike and averſion to the other. In this ſenſe it is, therefore, ſaid, "that, if any "man love the world, the love of God dwelleth "not in him; and the friendſhip, or love, of the "world is enmity towards God; and that a car-"nal, or worldly, mind is not ſubject to the

"law

"law of God, nor can be." It is not even in this case that the love or regard to worldly things is absolutely contrary to a love and regard for God; but it is so in effect and really, by the nature of men, by which such a degree of love and affection for worldly things will really be inconsistent with any great degree of affection, or regard and duty to God. It is easy for us to see (besides what the scripture has said) that God and this world are very different things, though they are not contrary in some sense; and that, therefore, the love of things so different must be different too. To love God, to regard him and to worship him, is to have a notion and a sentiment of an invisible being, of whom we can conceive nothing but things which are invisible though the most real, such things as wisdom, power, purity, justice, mercy, and goodness. We see these in his works, or we collect them from his works; but the things themselves are invisible. The world without God is only a sensible and outward shew, that strikes our minds strongly,

DISC. VII.

and

DISC. VII. and intereſts and engages us, only (if God is excluded) by our own intereſts and paſſions. It is no wonder, therefore, that theſe affections ſhould be contrary, or ſo inconſiſtent, that they cannot live long together, but one or other muſt prevail, and the other give place; and that, till this is ſettled, there can indeed be no real peace, happineſs, or ſatisfaction in our minds.

And if we conſider this but a little, we ſhall ſee that ſo far is our Saviour from laying upon us an hard or unreaſonable command, that what he has taught, and required of us as our duty, is in reality neceſſary for our happineſs and ſatisfaction. I need not be long upon this, becauſe it is really evident, that to live with one purpoſe, even almoſt whatever it is, is happier than to live by contrary and different ones, when they are in any conſiderable degree. It is not true, that exceſſively wicked and profligate perſons can at any time be happy. Though they live without ſhame and remorſe, they loſe all good pleaſures, and

and reaſonable ſatisfactions that are neceſſary for any degree of happineſs. But whoever is happy muſt be one who has propoſed to himſelf one certain thing; who has fixed certain bounds, and keeps within them. So that ſometimes he who has ſome moderation in worldly things, if he can ſatisfy himſelf as to religion, may really be happy in a great degree. But he certainly moſt of all will find happineſs, who, denying himſelf every thing that is hurtful to his purpoſe of religion and real goodneſs, can go on in a ſteady purſuit of theſe, with a ſatisfaction increaſing as goodneſs itſelf increaſes, and with this the hopes of a future and greater happineſs. DISC. VII.

There is one thing more to be obſerved; that, when our Saviour ſays we cannot ſerve two maſters, this itſelf ſhews, that he does not forbid our being concerned or employed in worldly things, as far as it is neceſſary, and our proper buſineſs, and conſequently our duty. He ſays, we cannot ſerve God and the world as *masters*, as different

and

DISC. VII. and ruling principles; but we may ſerve one, and juſtly regard the other, if we do this as our duty, and as what our great and heavenly Maſter will require of us. For then it is he only who would reign and govern within us; and the world and all its offices and duties would be inferior things, and would be regarded only on his account. This is the thing which makes what our Saviour has ſaid in this precept eaſy and clear to be underſtood, though it is not upon this account the eaſier to be practiſed: for it is required that we ſhould ſerve God with all our real and ſtrongeſt affections, and that we ſhould regard and be concerned for every thing elſe, ſo far as is agreeable to him and upon his account; becauſe he requires it if it is a duty, or becauſe he allows it if it is an advantage, or any natural ſatisfaction to us. So much as this is very eaſy to be underſtood, and ſhews what our Saviour requires to be perfectly reaſonable, and conducive even to our greateſt happineſs and ſatisfaction.

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What our Saviour has ſaid before this precept requires but little explanation, but is of uſe to ſhew us the ſpirit and purpoſe of this whole ſcripture. "Lay not up for yourſelves," ſays he, "treaſures upon earth, where ruſt and moth doth "corrupt, and where thieves break through and "ſteal; but lay up for yourſelves treaſures in "heaven, where neither moth nor ruſt doth cor-"rupt, and where thieves do not break through "and ſteal: for, where your treaſure is," ſays our Saviour, "there will your heart be alſo." For what the eye is to the body, that, he implies, is the notion of good and happineſs to the mind and to the life of man. It is the leading principle which muſt be right and clear. "No man can "ſerve two maſters; for either he will hate the "one and love the other, or elſe he will hold to "the one and deſpiſe the other: ye cannot ſerve "God and mammon." It is plain that our Saviour is afraid of that love of worldly things, which would deſtroy and choak his ſeed and all good affections, when he goes on to give ſo ſtrict commands

DISC. VII.

DISC. VII.

commands againſt it. "Therefore, I ſay unto "you, take no thought what ye ſhall eat or what "ye ſhall drink, or wherewithal ye ſhall be "clothed. Is not the life more than meat, and "the body more than raiment? Behold the "fowls of the air; for they ſow not, neither do "they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your "heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not "much better than they? And which of you, "by taking thought, by his great care, can add "one cubit to his ſtature? And why take ye "thought for raiment? Conſider the lilies of "the field, how they grow; they toil not, nei-"ther do they ſpin; and yet I ſay unto you, "that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not "arrayed like one of theſe. Wherefore if God "ſo clothe the graſs of the field, which to-day "is, and to-morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall "he not much more clothe you? Therefore, "take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall we eat, or "what ſhall we drink, or wherewithal ſhall "we be clothed; for after all theſe things do

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" the Gentiles ſeek; for your heavenly Father DISC.
" knoweth that you have need of all theſe VII.
" things. But ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God
" and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things
" ſhall be added unto you. Take, therefore, no
" thought for the morrow; for the morrow ſhall
" take thought for the things of itſelf: ſufficient
" unto the day is the evil of itſelf:" *i. e.* ſince troubles and difficulties are unavoidable, he would not have us add to them by our own care and anxiety before they come. We ſhould conſider that, though theſe things were intended *chiefly* for his own peculiar diſciples, and for thoſe who were to preach his goſpel, who *muſt* forſake *every* thing elſe; yet to *us* alſo they are proper and uſeful. They give us the beſt and higheſt notions of God's goodneſs and providence over all his works; and, by the divine ſpirit with which they are ſpoken, are the fitteſt that can be conceived to raiſe us above too great care and concern for worldly things.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VIII.

DIRECTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER.

MATTHEW VII. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one, that asketh, receiveth; and he, that seeketh, findeth; and to him, that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone; or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?

DISC. VIII. OUR Saviour's precepts, though they are above the common measures of duty, and fitted for

for him to give, who came from heaven to raiſe us up to it, to a better and higher ſtate of goodneſs and happineſs; yet are they not abſolutely or altogether diſagreeable or inconvenient in this preſent life; but would be the means to make us eaſy and happy, and more commendable even to thoſe who do not chooſe the ſame way, than we could be by any other means. DISC. VIII.

What I ſhall ſhew at preſent is, that, though piety and goodneſs is indeed happineſs, and though it has every thing in it that is truly deſirable; yet, to obtain this, and ſuch goodneſs, as that which our Saviour teaches and requires, is indeed moſt difficult, and that, therefore, moſt probably it is for this reaſon that he commands us to pray, giving us ſo great encouragement to hope that we ſhall ſucceed by theſe means; and that from God's goodneſs we may hope to receive that beſt gift, his grace and power, which

DISC. VIII.

may make these things possible, and lead us to our truest good and happiness.

And first of all, that true piety and goodness, especially such as our Saviour has taught, though it is apparent that it would be happiness and ease to be possessed of it; yet to be obtained is difficult, even when all means are used and the greatest care taken: now this will easily appear, if we remember what kind of disposition and temper it is that he has chosen and declared to be happy; that which, in the midst of riches, can choose to be poor, or not to value them; and in poverty can be content; for they shall have greater happiness (he says) in the kingdom of heaven. He blesses those who mourn; the meek; those, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, wishing for a better state: the merciful; the pure in heart; and the peace-makers. But it is plain, that this disposition and temper, which he commends, is not easy to be obtained, since it is such as is weaned or free from selfish passions and worldly

worldly deſires: for to mourn in ſuch a manner as our Saviour requires, and as will agree with all the reſt, is not ſuch a ſorrow as can belong to worldly, or to wicked, or ſelfiſh perſons. But it is a ſorrow for great and real afflictions, which worldly people do not feel. For they are giddy and diſtracted with many things; they can neither mourn nor rejoice. To be collected and ſerious, and to have our minds concerned for great and real things, (which is that temper which our Saviour requires) is ſuch an one plainly as is not eaſy to be obtained. DISC. VIII.

After this, we ſee that our Saviour requires and expects that his diſciples ſhould be eminent and be remarkable, not for any thing elſe neceſſarily, but by their real piety and goodneſs. They will be "the ſalt of the earth;" from whom others are to learn and to be inſtructed in the real and beſt knowledge. They will be like "a "city ſet on a hill;" which, he ſays, "cannot "be hid." Neither is it intended that they

DISC. VIII.

ſhould be concealed: "for men do not, when "they light a candle, ſet it under a buſhel, but "on a candleſtick; that it may give light to "them that are in the houſe. So let your light "ſhine before men; that they may ſee your good "works, and glorify your Father which is in "heaven." Now no one will doubt, but that our Saviour at the ſame time has required and taught the greateſt and moſt perfect humility; and that nothing is ſo contrary to his doctrine, and ſo unworthy of it, as a deſire of praiſe to ourſelves; to which, by his doctrine, we can never have any right. He has ſaid, in this his ſermon, moſt ſtrictly, that we muſt "not do any "thing to be *ſeen* of men." How then do theſe things agree? We may underſtand it by this; that, when our Saviour expects that we ſhould be ſeen, it is for this end; that the ſervice of God may be promoted; that men may be convinced by our example, (if we are ſo happy) of the goodneſs of that religion and that way, which he has ſhewn to men. Beſides that our Saviour

ſays,

says, we need not take pains; for, if we are really Christians, we must needs be in some degree remarkable. It is, therefore, not difficult to understand, how these precepts are given, and that they are perfectly consistent. To join these in practice, to be willing to be seen, and yet not to desire it, neither to shew our good works, nor to conceal them, this is difficult. To act in this manner certainly is our duty; but how shall we avoid both extremes?

DISC. VIII.

Besides this, all the precepts of our Saviour are in the highest degree: for "he came not," he says, "to destroy the law and the prophets, "but to fulfil them." It is not enough not to kill or not to do injury to our neighbour; we must not be angry intemperately, we must not say cruel or unkind things. Such tenderness and regard to men is of more consequence, our Saviour says, than outward religious duties. Therefore, "if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and "there remembereſt that thy brother hath aught

DISC. VIII.

"againſt thee; leave there thy gift before the "altar, and go thy way, firſt be reconciled to "thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." It is not enough not to commit ſin, but our Saviour ſays, that the *desire* of ſin is ſin itſelf. We muſt not only not forſwear ourſelves, or not raſhly uſe the name of God; but we muſt not ſwear in any other way, that avoids the name of God, but is in its effect and purpoſe the ſame thing. He does not mean that we ſhould not in any caſe reſiſt evil; nor, if we are ſtricken on our cheek, does he expect that we ſhould provoke another blow. That this is not literally required is plain from his own example, who, when he was ſmitten, did not aſk to be ſmitten again, but complained of it as unjuſt. "If I "have ſpoken ill, bear witneſs of the ill: but, "if well, why ſmiteſt thou me?" We ought to underſtand every thing in the beſt and moſt reaſonable ſenſe; and, therefore, we may juſtly ſay that he did not intend this ſhould be ſtrictly taken, but that it is a ſtrong expreſſion to ſhew,

that

that we ought to do every thing for God's honour and not our own. That, if it could be for his ſervice, or could more ſhew our patience and virtue, not only to bear but to receive more injuries, we ought to do it: but what remains, and is certain that he requires, is this, that, upon the greateſt occaſions we ſhould reſiſt, or defend ourſelves, without malice or revenge; that we ſhould have a good-will to our enemies; that we ſhould bleſs thoſe who curſe us or uſe ill language; and that we ſhould do any real good to them that hate us. There is no doubt but that this is taught and required: for, though he requires it here as *perfection*, that we "may be "the children of our Father who is in heaven; "for he maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and "on the good, and ſendeth rain upon the juſt "and the unjuſt;" yet in other places it is regarded as no more than what is reaſonable and duty from us, who are ourſelves forgiven, and have our hopes in God's favour by forgiveneſs only. But, though by this conſideration it is DISC. VIII.

DISC. VIII.

reasonable to forgive, and possible to love our enemies, and to bear them real good-will, without exposing ourselves to them; yet it is certain, that it is not an easy duty. And we shall be glad for this purpose, as well as others, that there is a promise of such assistance as can make it easy.

Our blessed Lord knew that the mind of man is indigent and weak, and wanting some good and happiness more than any other creature: that, therefore, if it has not good things in view, it will fix itself upon something that is but the shadow or appearance of good; or will take short and temporal good, for such as is better and everlasting. He requires, therefore, that we should "lay not up for ourselves treasures upon earth, "where rust and moth doth corrupt, and where "thieves break through and steal; but lay up for "ourselves treasures in heaven, where neither "moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves "do not break through nor steal: for, where "our treasure is," (where our interest is placed) "there

"there will our hearts be alſo." Where our greateſt intereſt is, there will even our religion be, if money or the world is loved beyond all other things. The remedy for this, the trueſt and beſt, is the hope of better happineſs, of better and greater than we can expect in this world, as well as everlaſting; while this is ſhort and periſhing; that hope of another world and another life, which our Saviour brought with him and hath ſet before us. With this we may think it would not be difficult to deſpiſe the miſerable and uncertain things of this life. But ſtill this life is *preſent*. The other happy way to heaven and the things that are there do not *appear* to us: they are made ſufficiently plain in ſcripture, and ſet before us in things that may be imagined, and may raiſe deſire. But worldly things come acroſs us: that light, which the goſpel has given, that pure eye of faith, which would guide our ſteps to peace and happineſs, is not kept clear. Worldly things intervene, which, though ever ſo clear, and preſent, and ſtriking, are yet darkneſs in our Saviour's ſenſe. DISC. VIII.

DISC. VIII.

ſenſe. And theſe things muſt not be mixed: we muſt not live by two principles, or ſerve two maſters. To ſerve God will require all our intention and employment, and ſo it would to ſerve the world. We are not capable of ſerving both; beſides that the things are very different and inconſiſtent. We muſt, therefore, bring one to be entirely inferior and ſubſervient to the other. We muſt do our duty to the world; we muſt be diligent, induſtrious, and do all the offices of life carefully and exactly, becauſe it is our duty, and for no other reaſon. If we are thankful to God, that is the trial, and ſhews which principle is ſuperior, the love of God, or the love of the world. If we are pleaſed and rejoice in the things themſelves, then theſe things are what we ſerve and love. We are not religious, nor in that ſtate which our Saviour requires. He is moſt ſtrict againſt the love of worldly things, and afraid of nothing ſo much as covetouſneſs. Nor is his command againſt judging or ſevere cenſures of others leſs expreſs: the reaſon that he gives is,

that

that we may not ourſelves be judged ſeverely, either in future time and by God's judgment, or now by men; for we cannot ſtand in judgment even before men, but have need of mercy and kind interpretation. But our Saviour did not mean that we ſhould be credulous, or that we ſhould think well of all alike, or againſt all appearance: he does not intend that his diſciples ſhould be weak, but that they ſhould be perfect. And, therefore, after that command to judge with favour and candour, he immediately gives that good caution; that there are people, who are profane and brutiſh, that we muſt not throw that which is holy to thoſe, nor throw pearls before the other; "leſt they tread them under their "feet, and then turn again, and rend us. This is the laſt of the rules and precepts of moral duty. Then follows the *direction and encouragement to prayer*, without any connection or the reaſon why it is here: but the place itſelf ſhews it. It is becauſe every precept that our Saviour had given before, even when we may think that we have DISC. VIII.

DISC. VIII.

have ſome virtue and ſome ſtrength of our own, and however reaſonable it is, may yet well ſeem to be difficult, and altogether almoſt impoſſible to be performed. For this reaſon, therefore, we may well think it was, that our Saviour, after his other precepts and commands, gave this concerning *prayer*, as the means by which we may be enabled and preſerved in religion and goodneſs. He gives it with the greateſt encouragement that we ſhall be heard from that goodneſs of God, which he came to ſhew to men; and of this he gives us the cleareſt notions. "Aſk, (ſays he) "and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and "ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened "unto you: for every one, that aſketh, re-"ceiveth, and he, that ſeeketh, findeth: for "who is there among you, of whom if his ſon "aſk bread, will he for bread give a ſtone; or, "if he aſk a fiſh, will he for a fiſh give him a "ſerpent? If ye, therefore, being evil, know "how to give good gifts to your children, how "much more ſhall your heavenly Father give "good

DISC. VIII.

"good things to thoſe who aſk him?" Now the beſt thing which we can receive, and the beſt gift of God, is his grace and ſpirit; and, therefore, this we may underſtand is what our Saviour means eſpecially; as, where this paſſage is in another Evangeliſt, in St. Luke, he ſays, "How "much more ſhall your heavenly Father give "the Holy Spirit to them that aſk him?" This great bleſſing, therefore, we have, by our Saviour's words, the greateſt encouragement to hope for and to expect, if we uſe proper prayer to him. For we cannot think that he would mean, that every prayer we offer to God, without attention or real deſire, would be ſucceſsful; or that this beſt and holieſt of all things, this pearl of the higheſt price, will be given to us, becauſe we ſpeak, but do not really deſire it. It is not eaſy, our Saviour ſays, to be virtuous or good; for he ſays after this, "Strive to enter in at the "ſtrait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is "the way, that leadeth to deſtruction, and many "there be that go in thereat. Becauſe ſtrait is

"the

DISC. VIII. "the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth "to life, and few there be that find it." The reaſon of this is, that goodneſs is the higheſt and beſt of all things, and men are imperfect and weak, and beſides fallen and corrupted. It muſt, therefore, be difficult to men. It is not to be ſuppoſed, therefore, that merely to aſk, without real deſire, or merely to ſay our prayers, will obtain this beſt thing and higheſt bleſſing; but we muſt ſtrive beſides by every other means, and uſe all our endeavours to avoid ſin, to ſtop our wrong inclinations, and get free, as ſoon as poſſible, from any diſpoſition or temper that is ill. We muſt have the freedom to examine our own minds, to know and to tell ourſelves the truth. We muſt keep our eye clear and intent upon that greateſt and higheſt good, which our Saviour has promiſed, our part in heaven and in his kingdom which is righteouſneſs and goodneſs made perfect. And we muſt increaſe our deſire and love of that happineſs, as well as of the advantages and the ſatisfaction of religion and

virtue

virtue in this life. When we value it truly as our real happineſs, and deſire and pray for it, as our greateſt and only good, knowing beſides, as we eaſily may, that it is too great a thing to depend upon ourſelves; this we may think is that prayer which our Saviour means, and which he ſays ſhall be anſwered; becauſe God is good, and is more kind than human parents, or than the kindeſt of human affections are. He will give his ſpirit and his requiſite aſſiſtance becauſe he is good, and becauſe this is the bleſſing and favour of the goſpel. DISC. VIII.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IX.

DUTIES OF PARENTS AND MASTERS.

GENESIS XVIII. 19.

I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do judgment and justice; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

DISC. IX.

WE may see, in these words, not only the great regard which God shews to religion and piety, (since it is on this account that he thinks Abraham worthy of peculiar favour, and to have his counsels communicated to him) but also the great care of God to preserve and to continue a religious

religious practice; and one means for preſerving and continuing it is the teaching and command of parents to their children. DISC. IX.

Now, that it is a duty of parents to command and to inſtruct their children, as far as poſſible, in the knowledge and practice of religion, *i. e.* to command and to teach their children their greateſt duty, the means of their greateſt and trueſt happineſs in this world, as well as the hope of everlaſting life and ſalvation to come; this I ſhall not at preſent endeavour to ſhew; but I ſhall ſuppoſe that he, who thinks himſelf, as a parent, obliged to give his child whatever is good, if he himſelf has been inſtructed, or has any regard or eſteem for religion, will not withhold this from him; or, when his child wants bread, will not give him a ſtone, or be content to give him any worldly happineſs or advantage without that knowledge and inſtruction, which is neceſſary, to *use and enjoy* rightly even all our worldly things. I know this may be ſuppoſed of thoſe

DISC. IX. parents, who have themſelves a due knowledge and concern for religion. Nay, it is to be hoped that even thoſe, who themſelves have had leſs the happineſs of good inſtruction, and who, for want of that and want of due care, have lived in a great diſregard as well as ignorance of their great duty, may, however, have ſo far a notion of what is beſt, and ſo much veneration for their higheſt duty, that they would not chooſe their children ſhould be ignorant, if they are ſo themſelves; or that they ſhould be neglected and ſuffered to go on in thoſe ways of ſin or forgetfulneſs of God and their duty to him, in which they themſelves have trod. They, who are themſelves religious, will at leaſt deſire, and by all proper means endeavour, that their children and their ſervants, and all whom they are concerned with, may be ſo too. What, therefore, I ſhall aim to ſhew, will be chiefly this; how much good may be expected from the command and teaching of parents and maſters; and how great a means this is of preſerving

preſerving and increaſing the knowledge and practice of religion. DISC. IX.

Then, afterwards, I ſhall ſay, by what means, and in what manner chiefly, this great duty of parents and maſters is to be ſhewn.

Firſt. Now that the command and teaching of parents and maſters will be a very great means of good, and of preſerving the knowledge and practice of religion may appear with ſome advantage (above what we may ourſelves ſee to be plain, and naturally to be expected) from this; that this kind of teaching has always been that, on which the knowledge and practice of religion has, in a great meaſure, depended; that this has been the means by which, in a great meaſure, the knowledge and practice of religion has in all ages been preſerved. We cannot indeed well think otherwiſe. But, however, it will be of uſe to ſee how this thing has always been in the world. We ſee in the Bible, that book of true know-

DISC. IX. ledge and inſtruction in all religious things; we ſee then that there has been from the beginning a religion of God's own teaching and command, a ſervice and worſhip of God; and, without doubt, commands and rules of the duty of men to one another. The worſhip and ſervice of God was performed, as it was afterwards, by ſacrifices and offerings brought to the place where God had appointed, and where he received them; as we ſee in the hiſtory of Cain and Abel. It is probable there were many other appointments, the ſame or like thoſe which the Jews afterwards received; and the obſervation of the ſabbath, it is moſt probable, was from the very beginning of the world: for, immediately after God's creation, it is ſaid, that "God bleſſed the ſabbath-day, "and hallowed it;" *i. e.* appointed it to be kept holy, as is moſt probable, from that very time. But, though ſuch great care was taken to command and teach a religion, yet we cannot ſee that any other means were uſed at that time to preſerve and continue it among men, than *that*

of

DISC. IX.

of parents commanding and teaching their children, and religious perſons inſtructing and edifying one another. It is not certain whether there was any writing at that time; though ſome have thought there was before the flood, and that by this means the memory of the moſt early things was preſerved and came down after the flood. But at that time there was leſs need of this way of preſerving knowledge, becauſe of the long lives of men, ſo that it came through very few hands; as you may ſee by the hiſtory to the time of the flood. It does not appear that at this time there were any perſons ſet apart for teaching and inſtruction, as there were afterwards, or for the worſhip and ſervice of God. But the worſhip of God and teaching was performed chiefly, as we may eaſily conceive, by the parents or the heads of families, and they inſtructed and taught one another. Thus it was among thoſe who at the time were called the family, or the children, of God. God appointed their religion and their duties; the parent and the head of the family

DISC. IX.

taught his children and thoſe whom he commanded, and they inſtructed beſides and edified, as we may eaſily ſuppoſe, one the other. Some remarkable men aroſe, ſuch as Enoch, who propheſied, it is ſaid, or ſpoke by an extraordinary inſpiration or command, of a future judgment; and Noah afterwards was made a preacher of righteouſneſs and repentance, and warned men of the deſtruction that would come upon the world, for its ſin and wickedneſs, without repentance; and he was not heard or regarded. But it does not appear that at that time there was any regular order of men appointed to perform religious duties or to teach them. So that at this time the inſtruction of young perſons was committed altogether to the parents, or to thoſe, who in other reſpects had the care and government of them. Which is a thing that may ſhew how much religion may depend upon the parent even at other times. Now after this it was a long time before any regular and public teachers were appointed: for, if Noah was the teacher after the

the flood, it was of his own family, who were all that remained. His ſons were to teach their families, and by this means the religion was to be preſerved, unleſs there were beſides ſome writings or ſome memorials of former times, which perhaps there were: but the main thing certainly depended upon the teaching and the authority of fathers and parents; and by their neglect it is probable that idolatry and wickedneſs prevailed in the world: when, therefore, the world grew wicked, then Abraham was called to leave his family and his kindred, and to come into another land, where he ſhould be the father of a people, who ſhould be brought up in the knowledge and fear of God; and this was his great praiſe from God, which you have heard in the words of my text; "God knew him, that he would command "his children and his houſehold after him, and "they would keep the way of the Lord, to "do judgment and juſtice." Thus it was in all the time of the patriarchs: and though afterwards, when the family of Jacob became a DISC. IX.

DISC. IX.

people, there was one tribe appointed as priests, or for the performance of the religious duties, which God thought proper to require of them; and though it was supposed "that the lips of the "priest should preserve knowledge;" yet how much was to depend upon the teaching of every parent and master in his own family, we may see from the following command of God; "It shall "come to pass, that when thy children shall ask "thee what meaneth this custom, or this practice, "then thou shall say unto them, Our fathers "were strangers in the land of Egypt, and God "brought them out with a mighty hand and "delivered them." They were to speak of God's blessings and mercies in their houses, "when "they lay down, and when they rose up;" and, as it is said in the Psalms, "they were to teach "their children, that they might not be like "their forefathers, a stubborn and perverse gene-"ration; a generation that set not their heart "aright, neither were they steadfast in the Lord." Besides this, it is true that at this time, their whole

whole hiſtory from antient times, and their law and duty, were written in a book, which was to be read not only by the prieſt, but by the father and maſter of families; without which care it is certain it could be of little uſe. If they fell, as they did often, into idolatry, and into other great ſins, we may juſtly think it was becauſe theſe great duties of reading the ſcriptures and the parents' good admonition and nurture were neglected. DISC. IX.

It is evident, that we are not to think that, though there are teachers of the people appointed, thoſe, who are to exhort in congregations, that for this reaſon the duty of parents to their children and to their families is not ſtill required. We cannot think this. But, if the goſpel is indeed the true religion, we ought the more to take care that it may not be loſt, or be ineffectual by the want of inſtruction and admonition; but we ſhould, as much as poſſible, endeavour to preſerve and increaſe it in thoſe, who are dear to us,

DISC. IX. us, or for whoſe good and happineſs we are concerned.

The duty, therefore, of parents and maſters, will be now under the goſpel, as much as ever it was, to take care of their children's trueſt good, and of their ſervants, who are under their care; by teaching them, as far as they are able, and by giving them all the proper means of knowledge and inſtruction. And, ſince our whole religion is written, as well as that of the Jews, and all that concerns our ſalvation is in the Bible, in the books of the Old and New Teſtament; it is greatly to be endeavoured that every child and even the meaneſt perſons in a Chriſtian country ſhould be taught to read. They muſt be taught beſides a ſhort form of their whole belief, ſuch as is in our excellent church catechiſm. Beſides theſe things, which properly concern knowledge, they muſt be nurtured and led to the *practice* of what is good. They muſt, therefore, be taught to make ſome prayers to God from the beginning;

beginning; to think of him as the author and giver of every thing; to pray to him for ſpiritual grace and bleſſings, as well as for the good things and neceſſaries of this life. The great or principal thing is to teach them to have a due reverence of God continually in their minds. For this reaſon, they ſhould be taught, in the plaineſt manner, that it was God, who firſt created the heavens and the earth; that it is he, who makes his ſun to ſhine and ſends rain; that it is God, who has ordered all things in this wiſe manner, for the good of men; that it is he, who makes the corn to grow; that it is he, who gives us our daily bread, our clothing and every neceſſary, comfort and convenience of this life. This is what they are very capable of learning, even when they cannot read. They will be taught this by the parent better than they can be by any other; becauſe parents have the opportunities of being with them at all times. And it is by much and often teaching that theſe things are beſt learned. They will ſoon apprehend them; DISC. IX.

for

DISC. IX. for the knowledge of God is natural to the mind of man. But to make this knowledge increaſe, and to make it effectual in the mind, there is need of continual care and teaching, and of authority to be uſed beſides; that they may learn to have a conſtant reverence of God, and to acknowledge him in his works; to have a reverence for every thing that belongs to him; not to uſe his name raſhly or irreverently, nor any bad words; of which great care ſhould be taken: when they have been taught to read in their mother tongue, (which, for the ſake of reading the ſcriptures, every one ſhould be taught) then care ſhould be taken that this may not be quite unprofitable to them by never being uſed or practiſed, and at laſt forgotten; which is often found: for we ſee too often that thoſe, who have learned to read when they are young, forget it afterwards when they grow up; which is great careleſſneſs. When they can read, they ought to be practiſed to read the ſcriptures; and particularly ſuch parts as are moſt proper for them,

ſuch

ſuch as any good Chriſtian, who reads the ſcriptures himſelf with any pleaſure, can chooſe; ſuch as are proper for them in many parts of the Old Teſtament; as the book of Geneſis, that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; the creation of man and the hiſtory of the firſt times. Then afterwards the miracles which were ſhewn to the Jews in Egypt and in the wilderneſs; and many parts afterwards in their hiſtory, ſuch as the call of Samuel by God himſelf to be his ſervant; the firſt actions of David; the miracles of Elias and Eliſha. Then afterwards thoſe books, which are the moſt moral, which are fulleſt of the expreſſion of true wiſdom, the fear of God, and of obedience and duty to him; ſuch as the book of Deuteronomy, the Proverbs and the Pſalms. Then ſome parts of the Prophets, which concern the goſpel; ſuch as ſpeak of the coming of Chriſt into the world, and the bleſſings of his kingdom. Such are chiefly to be found in the Prophecies of Iſaiah. Then afterwards the goſpels themſelves

DISC. IX.

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DISC. IX.

and ſuch other parts of the New Teſtament as are plaineſt and beſt. Theſe things parents and maſters ſhould take care that their children and ſervants ſhould read; and they muſt be brought to church, to join in the public worſhip of God, and to hear the public teaching and exhortation from God's word. The great thing that every parent and every maſter, who is worthy to have the care of a family, ſhould conſider, is that himſelf and all about him are God's ſervants; all equally under the eye and inſpection of one and the ſame great maſter. He ought, therefore, to bring them up in the reverence and fear of God, and in all their duty to him, which is to honour him in their hearts, and ſerve and obey him in their lives. That for this purpoſe he muſt do nothing that is wicked or irreligious; that he muſt ſet them a good example, by ſhewing an honour and reverence of God, and making this appear ſo far, that his children and family may *ſee* it, and learn from him, that the greateſt and firſt

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of all duties is that of religion; the reverence and love of God with all our hearts and minds; from which all other duties, and every good purpose, and every good action in this world, must proceed. DISC. IX.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE X.

MERCY PREFERRED TO SACRIFICE.

MATTHEW XII. 7.

If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

DISC. X.

IN the beginning of this chapter it is ſaid, that, when Jeſus was going on the ſabbath-day through the fields of corn, his diſciples, being an hungred, began to pluck the ears of corn, and, rubbing them in their hands, did eat. But, when the Phariſees ſaw it, they ſaid unto him, "Be- "hold! thy diſciples do that which it is not "lawful to do on the ſabbath-day." They did not

not mean that to pluck an ear of corn was againſt the law of God: for the law was not ſo ſtrict: the law had ſaid, (Deut. 23. 25.) "When thou "goeſt into the ſtanding corn of thy neighbour, "thou *mayest* pluck the ears with thine hand; "but thou ſhalt not move a ſickle into thy "neighbour's corn." But what they meant was, that it was againſt the law of the *ſabbath*, the law that required reſt, to do this on the *ſabbath-day:* ſo ſtrict they were, and more ſtrict than the law; for that allowed of ſuch work as was neceſſary, that every one ſhould eat. In anſwer to them, and to vindicate his diſciples, our Saviour ſaid to them, "Have ye not read "what David did when he was an hungred, and "they that were with him; how he came into "the temple of God, and did eat the ſhewbread "which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for "them that were with him, but only for the "prieſts?" But having excuſed this which was not lawful, he ſaid farther, "Or have ye not read "in the law, how that the prieſts, on the ſab-

DISC. X.

DISC. X.

" bath-days, profane the ſabbath by doing the " things *neceſſary* to be done, and are blameleſs?" The ſervice of the temple excuſed them. " But " I ſay unto you, that in this place is one " greater than the temple." Then he adds; " But if ye had underſtood the ſpirit and true " meaning of God's laws; if ye had known " what this meaneth, which God ſays, (Hoſea vi. 6.) " I will have mercy and not ſacrifice;" If ye had underſtood how plainly this teaches us that acts of mercy and kindneſs to men are preferable to any appointed and outward acts of religion; to any thing that may be omitted without any breach of love or duty to God; (for he does not want your ſacrifices, and has appointed and required them as ſigns of your reverence and duty to him, which you would ſhew more effectually, by ſhewing mercy, favour, or kindneſs to men) if ye had conſidered and underſtood this, ye would not have condemned the guiltleſs; thoſe who have done you no harm. Then he adds, " For the Son of Man is Lord even of the " ſabbath-day:"

"sabbath-day;" or, as this same thing is said more fully in St. Mark, where our Saviour adds, "For the sabbath is made for man, and not man "for the sabbath;" for the sabbath is appointed for the convenience of man, by appointing and requiring rest; for his good and honour, by releasing him from servile work, and allowing him a proper time to think of God and divine things, of a better and happier state than this in which he now is. This law was given as an honour and a privilege to man, and not as a burden or restraint. And if this is true of men in general, then he, who in his humbled state is the Son of man, a poor man himself, is Lord even of the sabbath. He had power to release his disciples from severe and rigorous observations, while he was strict to require of them *justice*, *mercy*, and the *love of God*. DISC. X.

Our duty to *God* is the first and greatest of all; and it is certain that our Saviour shews this in his life and his example. He has likewise

DISC. X. ſhewn the *moſt perfect example of mercy*, kindneſs, and goodneſs to men, *which he prefers* to the acts of religion or *ſacrifices*, which God does not want, and yet makes this conſiſtent with religion; the love of God being the firſt of all duties; ſince it is from religion itſelf that he requires this preference, becauſe God has required it, as the beſt inſtance of obedience to him; "I will have mercy and not ſacrifice."

And firſt of all to ſee our Saviour's goodneſs, kindneſs, or mercy to men, we muſt conſider what is before his hiſtory, before his appearing upon earth, which is the infinite goodneſs. and kindneſs to men with which he came. His firſt and higheſt reaſon for coming into this world was, as he has ſaid ſo plainly, and as appears in his practice, obedience to God; a deſire to make mercy and forgiveneſs conſiſtent with the honour and juſtice of God and the authority of his laws: that men may learn that ſin is ſinful, and not to offend, by ſeeing, in the greateſt mercy of God,

God, how difficult it was to be forgiven. But as in his doctrine the duty to God is firſt; and the ſecond, and which is like to that, is the duty to men, to our neighbours; which is to love them as ourſelves; ſo in his deſign of coming into this world, to be among men, and to be a man, after this firſt reaſon, that of doing the will of God, what was moſt pleaſing and acceptable to him after this, was his own mercy, kindneſs, and love to men, though this is the ſame love, or like it, and connected with it. For he, who loves God, will love his creatures alſo, while God loves them, or, when they are ſinful, where there is hope of their being changed and reconciled to God. This, therefore, is to be remembered, that our Saviour's deſign at firſt of coming into this world was from infinite love, compaſſion, and kindneſs to men. It was a deſign not by great actions, but by demeaning himſelf infinitely and ſuffering for them, to bring them through patience and leſs ſufferings than his own, to happineſs and glory with him. It was DISC. X.

DISC. X.

not poſſible that in any worldly thing, and by any good that he could do to men in this world, he could ſhew any goodneſs like this. Beſides, he had no worldly thing to give: he was himſelf poor and deſtitute of the common conveniences and advantages which we enjoy. He had no worldly power to ſerve any one. For he had deprived himſelf of all power of this world, that he might be able to ſerve us in other reſpects. The greateſt good that he could do to men, except that of undertaking and ſuffering for them, was to teach them by degrees, and as they were able to bear it, the hopes of a nearer acceſs to God; of a ſtate of favour and happineſs with him hereafter, and now in ſome degree; which is the good news of the kingdom of God, and it being at hand. By what means this kingdom would be obtained for men, this was to be explained more fully afterwards, and by degrees, himſelf giving plain hints, ſuch as were neceſſary, that it would be by himſelf and by his death, which his apoſtles declared more fully; teaching men

their obligations from this to love him and to ſerve him. He himſelf has done this in ſome meaſure, as perfectly as was poſſible before his death. Beſides this, was it neceſſary that he ſhould do any other good to men, while he was upon earth, beſides that of obtaining an everlaſting ſalvation for them, and taking care to have it taught and all the means to it ſhewn? What could he do more, or what could he do beſides this? It was, as his apoſtle ſaid, when by his ſpirit and his perfect teaching he knew ſo well his part, what he could do, and what his maſter required of him, when the poor lame man at the temple, who was laid there for alms, looked earneſtly upon him and his companion, as if he expected ſomething from them; then Peter ſaid, "Silver and gold have I none; but "what I have, that give I unto thee: In the "name of Jeſus of Nazareth ſtand up and "walk!" So it was with our Saviour himſelf: he had no ſilver or gold, nor any worldly good or bleſſing that he could beſtow. Health of

DISC. X.

Disc. X. body, to be delivered from ſickneſs, bodily infirmities and pains, was the next good thing, to that health of mind and ſpirit, that freedom from ſin, and hopes of future joy and happineſs, which he came to give. In this way, therefore, which was the only kind that was poſſible for him, and which was moſt worthy of a divine and powerful Saviour; which was moſt naturally the ſign and emblem of another and a higher power; "he went about" (as it is ſaid, and as we ſee in his hiſtory) "doing good; healing all that "were afflicted with any kind of diſeaſe," or with the worſt of any, ſuch as was by the poſſeſſion of evil ſpirits; which God ſuffered at that time, to ſhew his power over them, and that he would deliver us from all their power to ſeduce us to evil. He went about doing good; healing all that would but offer themſelves to him, and would aſk him with any regard or the leaſt proper diſpoſition towards him. This was a kind of goodneſs, which was worthy of him, and which he was able to do, and he did it moſt freely and liberally;

liberally: what he had he gave. When the people had brought together all that were ſick or diſeaſed in all the country round, he healed them *all*. He did all theſe things with plain ſigns of kindneſs and compaſſion. When a dead perſon was carried out, the only ſon of his mother, who followed him with tears, he had compaſſion on her: by his all-powerful word he raiſed her ſon to life. On two occaſions, when it was moſt proper, when the multitudes had been with him for ſome days, and had not ſufficient food, he conſidered their diſtreſs. Though he was ill provided to feed a multitude, he bade his diſciples to make them all ſit down. Though he lived himſelf by what others could give, by the charity of thoſe who miniſtered to him of their ſubſtance, he fed the great multitude by a miracle; making the bread to grow in their hands while they ate. That theſe things were done with human affections, though by divine power, appears plainly in many inſtances. It is even plain, that, though his command and high

MISC. X.

commiſſion

MISC. X. commiſſion was firſt of all to the people of Iſrael, according to God's former diſpenſations, though he gives this reaſon for ſhewing a preference to them in his miracles, as well as in his doctrine, yet it is plain he ſhewed this preference with affection to them, as to his own people. When he was entreated to heal the ſervant of a Roman Centurion, he made difficulties; he did not grant it: but when they that came ſaid, that this man had loved their nation, and built them a ſynagogue, then it is ſaid, he went in with them. When he healed the child of a Syrophenician woman, it was after much entreaty, and not without acknowledging the rights of his own people. "It is not right," he ſaid, "to give the children's bread to ſtrangers "and foreigners." Theſe diſtinctions themſelves ſhew human goodneſs, at leaſt as it is a condeſcenſion to the ways of men, and, as it was in him, without any prejudice or partiality. When he came to Jeruſalem the laſt time, when he was to be crucified, in the view and thought

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of the miſeries that would come upon it, he wept over it: "If thou hadſt known, even thou, at "leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong "unto thy peace! but now they are hid from "thy eyes!" DISC. X.

Our Saviour ſhewed, therefore, the moſt perfect human goodneſs by all the means that were in his power: which is an example for us to imitate, as far as we are able. The condition of ſome may be ſuch, that there is little in our power, in which we can do good to any. We may be poor and deſtitute of every worldly means. Even then, in the pooreſt and meaneſt condition, there is a duty which belongs to that condition, and which if we do, we not only do our duty, but we even *do good*. He, that lives ſuitably to that condition, in which God has been pleaſed to place him, by his example does good; by doing all that is required of him. He, that has no power to do any ſervice to any one, can *wish* well to all. He, that cannot do

good

DISC. X. good to those who are in want, may *pray* for all. He may pray for the truest good of every one; that the name of God may be honoured; that his kingdom of righteousness and goodness may come; that his will may be done in earth, as it is in heaven. He may pray for God's mercy and blessing upon all whom he knows; for his blessing upon all his friends, and on the people and church to which he belongs. We may all do this in the lowest station as well as in the highest. But, when the good things of this world are more liberally afforded us than they are to others, then we are bound to distribute them according to our ability. We ought to be faithful stewards to the good and gracious master whom we serve. Our God is just as well as merciful; and he will certainly demand an account of the talents with which he has entrusted us. Let us then seriously consider this. Let us endeavour to do good to all, as we have opportunity; considering, that, "if God so loved us, "we ought also to love one another;" and let

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us ſhew, as far as poſſible, in our outward acts, DISC. X.
the kindeſt and moſt charitable diſpoſition one toward another. To clothe the naked, as well as to feed the poor and hungry, is what our bleſſed Saviour requires in a very remarkable parable, where he ſays, "Inaſmuch as ye have "done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my bre-"thren, ye have done it unto me."

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XI.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW XI. 29.

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

DISC. XI.

IT is true, that theſe words may be underſtood of our Saviour's *doctrine*, which he required that we ſhould learn and practiſe. But as in him his doctrine and his example were the ſame; ſince he himſelf fulfilled all righteouſneſs, and was as perfect, as his doctrine was; ſo it is indeed plain, that what he means in theſe words, and what he would have us learn from this place, is not directly or not only his doctrine, but *himſelf*, his life, and his example; which he would have

have us obſerve and imitate, as far as we can, and as far as is proper and ſuitable to us. This is plain from what follows immediately after the words of my text: "For I am meek and lowly." By which plainly he refers to himſelf, to his life and example, which he would have us obſerve, conſider and imitate, as far as we can, and as far as it is proper for us. For it may be, and indeed it muſt be, that in ſuch a perſon, who was a real man, but was *more* than man; who was a divine perſon from heaven, endued with authority and power, which men cannot have; there may be ſome or many things, which it cannot be proper or ſuitable for us to imitate. Indeed it will not be difficult for us to know *what* theſe things are, which were peculiar to him, and which flowed from his divine authority and power, which are above men. But, except theſe, it is certain that he has left us an example, that is as perfect as his doctrine, and which belongs to us, to be obſerved, to be conſidered, and to be imitated; and which it is uſeful and neceſſary, DISC. XI.

DISC. XI. neceſſary, that we ſhould have continually in our thoughts and in our view; ſince the life and example of any perſon is a more ſenſible and lively, as well as a better, inſtruction, than any words or doctrine only can be.

And ſince it is ſo uſeful that we ſhould have this example continually before us in our thoughts and in our view, as much as poſſible, I ſhall endeavour, at this time, to ſet before you ſome things, that are moſt remarkable, in the life and example of Jeſus Chriſt, and muſt be proper for us, and for all Chriſtians to have in their thoughts continually; that his example in theſe things may direct and teach them as well as his doctrine, and more perfectly, as I obſerved before; in a more lively and ſenſible manner, than his words and doctrine alone, without the example, can do.

And, firſt of all, let us remember and obſerve, that the only purpoſe of our Saviour's life,

life, as it is repreſented to us in the goſpel, was to do good to men. In reſpect of their ſalvation, and true happineſs and goodneſs firſt of all; but not without regard even to the outward bleſſings of this life. He did not come to give us an abundance of ſuch things as are deſired by men, but which are often more an hurt and hindrance, than any real good or advantage to them. But, as his doctrine teaches us to deſpiſe theſe, and to deſire better things, in this reſpect he promoted continually the true good and happineſs of men. His doctrine always, in all caſes, if it is followed and practiſed, will produce for us more good and more happineſs than any advantages we can loſe. For he has ſaid, that "no man ſhall leave houſe, "or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, "or wife, or children, or lands, for his ſake and "the goſpel's, but he ſhall receive an hundred fold "now in this time;" houſes, and brethren, and ſiſters, and mothers, and children, and lands; he ſhall receive theſe, he ſays, in this life. This is a remarkable paſſage. How then was this ſaying DISC. XI.

DISC. XI. saying fulfilled? It certainly was fulfilled in the love which our Saviour's disciples had for one another; when every Christian was a relation, a brother, a sister, a father, and a mother, and every one enjoyed the real blessings and happiness that others had: and this our Saviour said, was an hundred fold of good and happiness, and even in this life; though it would be, he says, with difficulties and persecutions. And we may judge ourselves, that it would be true, not only from this, that he has said it, but because we may be able to conceive, that the joy and happiness of Christians, in their union with one another, and in the blessing and sense of his favour, would be much greater happiness than could have been had in all the pleasures and advantages of this world. By this doctrine, therefore, he meant the good and happiness of men in all respects; for it is so without doubt, if he meant their happiness in this life; since it is plain, if they are happy in this life, that happiness will be continued in that future life, which he has so particularly proposed

and promiſed. Beſides this, we ſee that his life was really a continued act of goodneſs and compaſſion to men. He healed their diſeaſes and infirmities by his divine power; and, as far as it was poſſible, he did this without making too great a ſhew of his power, or making this ſeem to be the greateſt or that very bleſſing which he came to give. For many reaſons, which it is not neceſſary to ſhew at this time, he was obliged to do theſe miracles of goodneſs as well as power, with ſome degree of privacy and concealment; even though his deſign was to be known: for the world was not fit to receive his power and goodneſs all at once. His friends and followers, at that time, not being renewed in their minds, did not know how to admire or honour him with right affections, or with right views. And his enemies were ready to be inflamed at every thing, and to be provoked the more by every proof that he gave of a divine power. But yet we ſee with what true kindneſs and compaſſion to men, he "himſelf took upon him their ſickneſſes, and DISC. XI.

DISC. XI.

"bore all their infirmities." He bade thoſe, whom he healed, conceal his miracles for theſe reaſons; that they might not make too much noiſe, nor give too great offence to his enemies; but that they might bear with him till his full time was come. And he often ſeemed to make difficulties before he would heal, or do the good which he deſigned to do. But the reaſon of this was, that he would teach men to value what he did; and becauſe he would not throw pearls before ſwine, or that which was holy to unworthy perſons. But he never refuſed to do a miracle of healing or kindneſs to any that aſked him with a good intention; and he did it always in the kindeſt and moſt affectionate manner, though with very little ſhew. Therefore, St. Peter has ſaid truly, as one mark and proof of his being a divine perſon, and coming from God as the Saviour to men, that, "being anointed with the "Holy Ghoſt and with power, he went about "doing good, and healing all that were oppreſſed "with the devil," or labouring with infirmities

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and diſeaſes. It was, as he ſaid himſelf to the meſſengers which John ſent to him; "Go, tell "John what things ye ſee and hear. The lame "walk, the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf "hear; and the dead are raiſed." This was done not only as an act and a proof of his power, but with kindneſs and compaſſion in particular caſes. As when he raiſed the widow's ſon, being touched with compaſſion for his mother; or Lazarus, for the love he had to him, and compaſſion to the ſorrow and affliction of his friends. It is by conſidering theſe actions of our Saviour, as well as his great deſign and doctrine, that we ſhall ſee the pattern and image of true kindneſs and goodneſs. For he came into the world to give to men every thing that was truly good; to give them true health and happineſs of mind here in this life; and to obtain for them everlaſting ſalvation hereafter. But he did not refuſe to give them other bleſſings. He gave health to the ſick, and eyes to the blind, and ſtrength to the lame and weak. He did not give riches or

DISC. XI.

DISC. XI. pleaſures; becauſe, though he was the Lord of heaven and earth, being the ſon of God and heir of all things; yet, while he was upon earth, he choſe to be poor; ſo that he could ſay, as his Apoſtle St. Peter did, that "he had none of thoſe "things; but what he had, he gave:" he gave every natural bleſſing, as well as ſpiritual joy, ſatiſfaction, forgiveneſs, and happineſs.

2dly. And here now we may ſee another part of our Saviour's life and example that is propoſed for Chriſtians to follow and to imitate. For, as he was the ſon of God, the heir of all things, who had the power of miracles in his hands, that he could feed thouſands, whenever he thought fit; yet for himſelf he ſubmitted to be poor, to ſuffer hunger and thirſt, and to be ſupplied by the charity and bounty of others. This ſhews us in him the greateſt and moſt perfect diſregard of all the riches, advantages, and pleaſures of this life. He choſe, for our ſakes, to be poor, that we, through his poverty might be

be rich: *i. e.* in ſpiritual bleſſings plainly; for he did not come, and he did not promiſe to give his followers worldly things and worldly bleſſings; but he declared before-hand, and promiſed them, the contrary. "He, that will be my diſciple, "let him forſake all, and take up his croſs, and "follow me." So it was then; it was neceſſary at that time to forſake all outwardly, and it may be ſo now in many caſes; but now, and at all times, it is required, that, if we have theſe things, we ſhould forſake them all really in our hearts and affections. That they, who have them, ſhould be as though they had them not, ſhould know they have them only by God's favour, and ſhould enjoy them with great moderation, and not ſet their hearts and their affections upon them. In this, he is *our example* plainly, and we might think that there would be no need that the ſcripture ſhould teach or require this. For, if we acknowledge him, who, when he was the ſon of God, thought fit to be poor; to be without all the advantages and pleaſures of DISC. XI.

DISC. XI. this world; we cannot think it is proper for us, if we have these things, to enjoy them as the *greatest* or *truest* happiness; and, least of all, to value ourselves upon them; or, if we have them not, to set our thoughts and endeavours upon obtaining them. We could not of ourselves think that this would be proper for us; and, therefore, we cannot wonder, that the imitation of him in these respects should be plainly required of us, as it is. And, as it is a rule settled and understood always, that we should be like him; so our likeness in this respect is continually required. "We are baptized," it is said, "into his death," and to a profession of dying as he did, to the sins and temptations of the world; and "they that are Christians," it is said, "have crucified the flesh with it's "affections and lusts."

There is another thing to be observed; that, though our Saviour Christ was perfectly and truly

truly good, yet he was eaſy in himſelf, and kind and indulgent to others. DISC. XI.

I have ſcarcely time to ſhew this as much as it deſerves. He was ſo far from being ſtrict to others, that it was made an objection to him; and he was called "a friend of publicans and ſinners." A great many things of this kind ought to be obſerved: as that all his diſcourſes, his beautiful parables and compariſons, are taken from what is moſt ſtriking in nature, or what is moſt cheerful, agreeable, and beſt in the life of men. It is a ſower, that goes forth to ſow; a marriage, or a feaſt; or a ſon receiving his inheritance from a kind and affectionate father. He ſpeaks from what is preſent, and points to the things, when he ſays, "Behold the fowls of "the air; they ſow not, neither do they reap."

Another thing that ſhould be obſerved, and that ſhews the greateſt and higheſt perfection is this, that we ſhould ſee that upon all occaſions

DISC. XI.

sions his behaviour is suited, and always right, but not the same. He is kind and gentle, and yet severe: he is open, and yet reserved in general: he is humble and meek, and yet has a greatness that is peculiar to him, and makes him different from the best of his apostles. These are his perfections, which, if we cannot always imitate, it is yet right we should know.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XII.

CHRIST'S ANSWER TO THE DISCIPLES OF ST. JOHN.

LUKE VII. 22.

Then Jesus answering said unto them; Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear; the dead are raised; to the poor the gospel is preached.

DISC. XII.

IT is said before this, that our Saviour having performed many miracles, and especially that of raising the widow's son from the dead, that this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea

DISC. XII.

dea and throughout all the region thereabout; and the diſciples of John the Baptiſt, who was at this time in priſon, brought him an account of theſe things. Then John, calling unto him two of his diſciples, "ſent them unto Jeſus, "ſaying, Art thou he that ſhould come; or do "we look for another?" They came to him from John, with their queſtion exactly in his words, to which it ſeems that our Saviour gave them no immediate anſwer, but bade them ſtay with him; for he was with many people round him. And at this very time, or immediately after their ſpeaking, he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil ſpirits, and unto many, that were blind, he gave ſight. Then Jeſus anſwering ſaid unto them, "Go your way and tell "John what things ye have ſeen and heard; "how that the blind ſee, the lame walk, the "lepers are cleanſed, the deaf hear, to the poor "the goſpel is preached: and bleſſed is he, "whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me." From all this place conſidered together, it is very likely that

that the disciples of John had yet the infirmities and prejudices of the Jews, or which were common to them, not quite removed; that they expressed a state of happiness and prosperity in this world, though not altogether worldly, but mixed of worldly prosperity and piety together: according to that of Zacharias, that, "being deli- "vered from the fear of our enemies, we might "serve God without fear, in holiness and righ- "teousness before him all the days of our life." This was the best notion they had in general, and it was indeed a good one. But from this they expected that our Saviour would appear in a different manner; that he would perform miracles more extraordinary in their effects, such as would change the state and condition of this world, or such as would deliver them from their enemies or from the power of the Gentiles to which they were now subject. It does not appear, (or not from this place) whether John himself had any mistake of this kind; which however is not so likely, when we consider the great

DISC. XII. great and extraordinary knowledge which he had at this time, and above all others, of the design and nature of the gospel; and that it was, therefore, to cure or to remove the prejudices and mistakes of his disciples that he sent them that they might see our Saviour himself: for he would find means, he thought, that would satisfy them. Now the miracles, which our Saviour performed at this, or at other times, though they were great and divine, yet as they were cures of poor and particular persons, they did not promise any great things, nor could seem to have any view to public deliverance: yet it was to these that our Saviour appealed. He gave them no answer, but kept them with him to see his miracles in this way: and then he said to them, "Go "your way, and tell John what things ye have "seen and heard: how that the blind see, the "lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf "hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gos-"pel is preached: and blessed are they who "shall not be offended in me." Blessed are they,

they, who will accept of ſpiritual happineſs and in another world; or if it is in this life, yet very different from what is worldly: who will take theſe ſimple and particular miracles which I do, thoſe, which have no deſign to alter kingdoms, or to change the affairs of this world; but yet are benefits real, and the moſt natural and proper to ſhew my power; ſuch as will be effectual for greater remedies, the moſt ſolid and inward; to change your natures here and in this life in ſome meaſure; but more perfectly and remarkably, when my kingdom will come and be accompliſhed. Bleſſed are they, who will accept of this ſalvation and of theſe my proofs. For the happineſs which I deſign is above this world. It is not like human proſperity or greatneſs, which is in appearance only: but that, which I ſhall give, will be real and particular to every one. It will conſiſt in better things than of this world, and therefore it is to the poor, to the moſt deſtitute of worldly things, that I preach and declare theſe good

DISC. XII.

DISC. XII. good tidings. It is to ſuch I apply myſelf, and ſuch I allow and encourage to be with me.

The goſpel, therefore, the good tidings of the kingdom, which our Saviour preached, was in a particular manner the bleſſing of the poor, and was offered to them in a particular manner; while by the poor are meant not ſo much thoſe who are without worldly things, as thoſe who by whatever change or temper have no reliſh for them; of whom he ſays at another time, that "bleſſed are they; for theirs is the kingdom of "heaven;" and that there are indeed ſome particular reaſons, why the poor, or the afflicted in any kind, ſhould rejoice in the glad tidings of the goſpel, which Chriſt brought and declared to the world.

This I ſhall now ſhew firſt; and then afterwards I ſhall ſhew that there can be really no great difference in this reſpect, even in the moſt proſperous ſtate of this world, only that this is apt,

apt, as our Saviour ſays, to blind men, or to hinder them from looking higher to this other and more glorious happineſs. But in reality it is almoſt in the ſame degree, and for the ſame reaſons, moſt deſirable, and ought to be with joy accepted by all. DISC. XII.

And firſt, that the poor, with whom we may reckon thoſe, who by any reaſon have no great delight or reliſh in worldly things, that they have more particular reaſons to accept with joy the glad tidings which Chriſt brought and declared to the world, and to make it their great point to obtain it.

There is nothing in this that is not very plain; but it may be uſeful to be remembered. For why ſhould not the poor, thoſe who have not the advantages of this world, or thoſe who, not having, do not deſire them; or who, having them, have been taught to know how inſufficient they are; why ſhould not they, who are not, or

DISC. XII. do not think they are, happy in this life, for this reaſon at leaſt deſire the more an everlaſting and better life, where there will be no wants, and in which there will be all the higheſt good; which is that hope which our Saviour and his apoſtles preached and ſet before us? If any have reaſon to deſpiſe the offers which Chriſt brought with him into the world, the kingdom and happineſs which he promiſed; it is the rich or great, or thoſe who have moſt of the advantages of this life, and who have health, and temper, and the diſpoſition to enjoy them. Perſons, in ſuch a ſituation, may think they ſhould enjoy the preſent, and that they have no occaſion to look on to what may happen afterwards. But it is certain that none, however happy in this life, can have reaſon to deſpiſe an happineſs that is of an higher kind and everlaſting; and in reality that there is very little difference in the conditions of men; or that this is nothing in reſpect of an eternal happy ſtate; or that ſuch is to all equally deſirable. But ſtill, if any think themſelves now

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DISC. XII.

deſtitute of worldly advantages, and not likely ever to have them in any degree, or not ſo as the rich and proſperous have; ſhould not this be a reaſon with ſuch perſons to deſire a truer and greater happineſs, which is offered to them equally with others; and which our Saviour himſelf ſeemed to offer to them more particularly than to the great and rich, or applied himſelf to them more? If any perſons ſay, that we have not thoſe worldly things which others have is that which is our miſery; we ſhould be happy if we had them; if they think this, they are not the poor of whom our Saviour ſpeaks: for they are ſuch as ſuffer poverty and hardſhips, but are content and patient in their ſufferings. A poor perſon, who cannot be happy, without being rich, is farther from the kingdom of heaven, than even the rich man, who, having theſe things already, is nearer, by deſpiſing them: for that is our condition: we muſt have the riches firſt, and muſt learn how little happineſs there is in them and from them, before we can deſire another

DISC. XII.

and an happier ſtate: and this is a long and difficult way. But rarely there is happineſs in worldly things, if we had them but in any degree beyond what we have at preſent; and it will be ſtill increaſing as we get more: and is not this, we are apt to think, an happineſs which our nature urges us to aim at and deſire? We may perhaps be right to mend or to advance our worldly affairs, if we eaſily can: but, if we could do this ever ſo much, let us not think that this would be happineſs: or, if it was ſo in any degree, when we come to be rich and conſiderable; yet, let us conſider, that, if we are poor or low now, we are behind in this purſuit. Will it not be better to aim directly at that happineſs, and that future life, and to ſet our hearts and deſires upon that, which is as near to us, as it is to others, and upon which we may ſet out with ſome advantage, even becauſe we are leſs hindered with worldly things, and with worldly engagements: I mean, if we are in ſuch a condition, as to have the common neceſſaries and

the common conveniences of this life. Had we not better not ſit down, I do not mean, nor neglect any one worldly concern, which can do us any good; but not to be *anxious* about any thing in this world; but to keep our views and our hopes fixed upon that better and immortal happineſs, which is reſerved for us in heaven; which is certain, and of which we cannot be diſappointed? And ſhould we not endeavour to remedy our uneaſineſs, and to leſſen the opinion which we have of worldly things, by examining them in themſelves firſt of all, by aſking and conſidering whether it is they that give us the happineſs or ſatisfaction, that we have at any time; whether they can cure a ſickly body, or an uneaſy mind; whether they can ſecure us from misfortunes and vexations; or whether they do not give them; whether they can ſave from death, or beyond death can be of any ſervice? If they cannot do theſe things, why ſhould we value them? Or, whatever effect they have, can any thing in them, or that proceeds from them, DISC. XII.

DISC. XII. be equal to that happineſs which is offered and ſet before us in the goſpel, and from God himſelf? If we cannot from our own thoughts, or from the things themſelves, be ſatisfied of the vanity of worldly things, or their inſufficiency to make us happy; we may ſee the weakneſs and imperfection of every thing elſe, in that heavenly happineſs which is propoſed to us, and before which every thing elſe diſappears in the compariſon. We ſhould uſe all means that are poſſible to leſſen our affections for worldly things, eſpecially when we have them not; that we may not loſe time, in endeavouring after them; but may go directly, and the ſhorteſt way, to that happineſs of another world, and think at leaſt this a peculiar bleſſing to thoſe who can have but little hopes of happineſs, if it depends upon riches, or any wordly advantage.

But have not all men reaſon to accept with joy the bleſſings and the good tidings which our Saviour

Saviour brought into the world? It is offered to all, and deſerves equally to be accepted by all: or, if any think it is not equally deſirable to them, it is only becauſe they have happineſs with which they can be content. It is not neceſſary for us to underſtand theſe things as they are in themſelves, and to know the condition and thoughts of other people, or, from what we ſee, to determine how far any can be happy by the mere advantages of his condition, and by things of this life. To *Chriſtians* there is a ſhort way of knowing theſe things, as far as is neceſſary. They need not go through every part and condition of this world, in order to judge rightly of it. They are taught by him, who made the world, what to think of the preſent life. They are told the pleaſures and the enjoyments of it cannot be great; at leaſt in another way they ſee it can be of no value at all; I mean by conſidering and comparing it with the glories and happineſs which will be ſhewn hereafter, and which now appear ſufficiently: for it is a DISC. XII.

DISC. XII.

right way of judging what is great or conſiderable, by comparing together the things of the ſame kind. For what is great is great, being compared to ſomething elſe. So what is great happineſs and deſirable in this life is in reſpect of another and lower condition. In reſpect of heaven, and an immortal life, what is any happineſs or greatneſs in this life?

What is requiſite to ſuch perſons, and indeed to all, is this, to remember and to conſider what thoſe things are, which by the goodneſs of God to men are publiſhed and declared with the greateſt certainty, and with the greateſt plainneſs that was poſſible. If the things, which are plain in ſcripture, are not ſufficient, we may imagine whatever elſe is ſuitable and agreeable to what is known. It is a divine ſtate of life and being to which we are called. It is what we aim at in this life by all the advantages which we can get. We aim at being at eaſe; we aim at pleaſures and independence. We cannot find

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DISC. XII.

these things here perfect and unmixed. We have them for a little time. It is not, therefore, only to the poor that the gospel is preached and offered, but to all persons; it is in reality desirable to all alike; for it is only opinion that makes some think, they want this comfort more, and others that they want it less, or are sufficiently happy by the pleasures of this life. Let us then be aware of the vanity and insufficiency of all things here below, and so shall we fix our thoughts and hopes on that place where only true joys are to be found.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS.

PHILIPPIANS III. 8, 9, 10.

Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

DISC. XIII.

THE Apoſtle, in this place, and chiefly in theſe words, ſpeaks of the excellency of Chriſtian

tian knowledge, which he calls the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt; becauſe the whole virtue and power of his doctrine depends upon him, and upon what he has done. For it conſiſts, he ſays, in "knowing him and the power of his "reſurrection, and the fellowſhip of his ſuffer-"ings, being made conformable unto his "death." As St. Paul lays ſo great ſtreſs upon this knowledge, as it is indeed that which he thinks to be properly the knowledge of Chriſt, and which, therefore, belongs to us as Chriſtians, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the excellency of this knowledge. DISC. XIII.

1ſt. And firſt of all, what is the effect which the knowledge of Chriſt's reſurrection ought to have; conſidering this firſt, both becauſe the Apoſtle does ſo, and becauſe this is the completion of the other?

And 2dly. What are the effects which the knowledge of Chriſt's death and ſufferings ought to

DISC. XIII. to have; and that by both these things, the knowledge of Christ is indeed most excellent and perfect?

1st, And first, I shall shew what are the effects which the knowledge of Christ's resurrection ought to have; considering this first, both because the Apostle does so, and because this is the completion of the other, and therefore may be proper to be considered first.

Now if we begin in this manner, to speak first of that which is neareſt to the end, we may consider first, that, it is one effect of Christ's resurrection, that it gives a certainty of our own rising from the dead hereafter, and to be made happy with him, if in this life we do our duty, and love him and serve him. In what manner our resurrection, our rising from the dead, depends upon our Saviour's resurrection, we may see most plainly from this. We cannot think, that he, who is our Saviour and came from heaven, that he

he had any reaſon of his own to die and to riſe again. He came into the world, and did all that he did and ſuffered, for our ſakes. So far is this true, that in the ſcripture he is repreſented as being united to us by his concern (firſt) for us, in ſuch a manner or ſo perfectly, that he is ſaid to be the head, and we the limbs or members, or his body. And that we are members of his body, of his fleſh and of his bones: for the ſcripture itſelf does not know how to repreſent this ſtrongly enough: and, therefore, you may ſee that which is the neareſt and the moſt affectionate relation among men, that of huſband and wife, is not thought ſufficient to expreſs the greatneſs of Chriſt's affection and concern for us: now, as ſoon as this is ſeen, it is plain that one effect of our Saviour's riſing from the dead is a certainty that we alſo ſhall riſe; for beſides, that he is ſet as an example, it is evident that he came for this end, to be a Saviour, an everlaſting Saviour, and a prince of life: when he is riſen himſelf, he cannot leave thoſe whom DISC. XIII.

DISC. XIII.

whom he loves to perish or lie in the grave for ever. He must raise them from the dead: for, if his argument holds, that when God only called himself the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, it was plain that Abraham, and those of whom he is the God, must live; for otherwise he would not be their God. It is much stronger and plainer that he, who is our Saviour as well as God, when he himself is risen, will not leave those, for whose sake he was content to die, and for this very purpose, that he might destroy the power of death over us; he will not leave us to perish and lie for ever in the grave; but he will call us from the dead, and raise us to happiness with him in another life.

Thus it is certain, as the Apostle St. Peter says, that "God hath begotten us again to a "lively hope, by the rising of Jesus Christ from "the dead." But this is the last effect in time, which this doctrine ought to have: for before it

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can well or reaſonably give us this hope with ſteadfaſtneſs and certainty, it is plain that we muſt perform that which is required of us; we muſt not only believe this and his other doctrines, but ſuffer it to have it's due effect with us: and the greateſt and the moſt perfect is that which is called in ſcripture our riſing as from death, here at preſent, to a new life of holineſs and goodneſs; which may begin even from that future hope; becauſe it is ſo great an encouragement and motive to a free and lively ſervice of God, though it muſt be firſt, before that great hope can be eſtabliſhed and certain. It is evident that this is part of the Chriſtian doctrine, as you will ſee in all the New Teſtament; in the Epiſtles eſpecially, where the knowledge and doctrine of Chriſt is moſt explained. Nor is it poſſible, I ſuppoſe, to teach the neceſſity of a new life, a life of righteouſneſs and goodneſs by any means better than this, the making our Saviour himſelf an example to us, not only by all his actions and converſation, while he was alive,

DISC. XIII.

DISC. XIII.

alive, which we ſee pictured to us ſo plainly in the hiſtory of the goſpels, but by his riſing again to a new life, when he had lain in death. Though perfect, and innocent, and holy, he died as a ſinner: when, therefore, he roſe again, this might juſtly be made an example to us, that "we "alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life." It is clear and plain doctrine, which is all that I conſider at preſent; and it is moſt likely of itſelf to have a good effect upon us, becauſe it keeps our Saviour in view and in our thoughts; for the love of whom we ought to do every thing that he requires, or that we know to be agreeable to him. And if we are told farther, that there is a new life, and a new ſpirit that is given to us, a power even now, by which we ſhall be raiſed from the death of ſin, and made alive to righteouſneſs and goodneſs; then this is another excellence of our Saviour's doctrine, that it gives us this hope of ſo great aſſiſtance, that in this life it is called a quickening and a raiſing from the dead. But of this I do not ſpeak any otherwiſe,

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than as it is an hope and an encouragement that belongs to our Saviour's doctrine, and is made lively and clear to us by his rising from the dead. DISC. XIII.

But now I am to consider the other part of the knowledge or doctrine of Christ; that it teaches, and indeed requires of us, to take part, and to "have a fellowship in his sufferings, being "made conformable to his death."

If we take part in Christ's sufferings, and if we are in any degree conformed to his death, or die with him now, and while we are alive, and in this world; this must be by our remembering and considering what the reason was of our Saviour's death; that it was to purchase, or to obtain by his merit, our pardon and our forgiveness with God as the first blessing, and necessary for all others which may follow after, but cannot be before this: for, while we are sinners before God, till he is reconciled to us, we can

DISC. XIII. expect no favour or bleſſing. He died, therefore, for our greateſt benefit, and the cauſe of his death moſt properly was ſin, which I think is plain and ought to be conſidered. Now, if he died for our greateſt benefit, this ought to produce gratitude and love to him; if our great benefit was obtained by his great and extraordinary ſufferings; (for they were more, we have great reaſon to think, they were much more even than they appear to be) this ought plainly to increaſe our gratitude and our love to him. We ought to ſuffer with him, or to take part of his ſufferings, as with a friend. This alſo is plain; and we ought to do every thing that is right and good, which he requires of us. But the end of his death was to lead men to all righteouſneſs and goodneſs, as the true means of happineſs and glory; to redeem or to deliver firſt from the power of ſin, as well as from the guilt of it. He requires firſt of all, that we ſhould forſake ſin in the moſt perfect manner; not only in the commiſſion but in the deſire itſelf, and in the heart: that

that we ſhould die to it in the moſt perfect manner, or as far as poſſible. Now to perſuade us to this, or more than to perſuade, to move us moſt effectually, what ſo proper means can be conceived, as to remember that the cauſe of Chriſt's death, of all his ſufferings, was our ſin? For, firſt of all, this ſhews us moſt plainly, how great the guilt of ſin is; ſince it could be forgiven by no other means than this, the ſufferings of a divine perſon, and his ſo great ſuffering, through all his life as well as death, on this account. This, more than all other things, if it be conſidered rightly, teaches us repentance and fear of offending: for how ſinful and how dangerous muſt ſin be, which could be forgiven by no other means than this! We can never think that it ſhould be neceſſary for ſuch a perſon to die, and to ſuffer ſo much, for ſin; (for it was neceſſary, the ſcripture ſays in the ſtrongeſt manner, and that it could no otherwiſe be forgiven) and then afterwards that ſin ſhould become an indifferent thing, and ſhould loſe the guilt and its nature, DISC. XIII.

DISC. XIII.

which it had before. The only liberty or releaſe, that our Saviour Chriſt could procure for us, was the forgiveneſs of *paſt* ſins. He did obtain this, and he bought it at a great price: for the future he requires that we ſhould ſin no more; that we ſhould forſake ſin abſolutely and die to it, that we may live to him, to his love and ſervice. It is certain we ought to love him more than all other things and perſons.

We muſt, therefore, forſake what is diſagreeable to him; and, becauſe he died for ſin, we are obliged to die to it, to forſake it for every reaſon; both from fear, ſince we know how great the guilt and danger is, and from love and duty to him, who ſuffered and died upon our account.

I ſpeak of theſe things in a ſhort and in the plaineſt manner, that you may ſee now, in ſome meaſure, the excellency of this knowledge, which the apoſtle ſays properly is *the knowledge*

of

of Christ; becauſe it all depends and turns upon him. And, therefore, in another place he ſays moſt truly, that in him Chriſtians are complete and fully inſtructed: for we can want nothing more for inſtruction; his death ſhews the neceſſity of repentance both from fear, as I ſaid, and induces to it by love, by gratitude, upon the greateſt reaſon that can procure love; "for "greater love than this hath no one, that a man "ſhould lay down his life for his friend:" but Chriſt did more than barely to die. We are taught a new life; a life of new affections and deſires by his reſurrection; and that, when we can forſake ſin, we ſhould not then be dead or inactive: for his ſpirit and his power are promiſed to aſſiſt us in leading a new life of holineſs and goodneſs. When our Saviour Chriſt had overcome the pains of death, "he opened the king-"dom of heaven to all believers." From theſe conſiderations, the neceſſity of Chriſt's ſufferings, and the real benefit and ſalvation which he has obtained, ſhould ariſe the greateſt love and gra- DISC. XIII.

DISC. XIII. titude to him, who, by so great sufferings, has delivered us, and given us hope; the hope of heaven hereafter, and of joy and freedom from sin in this life.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE SON OF MAN'S DEATH A RANSOM FOR MANY.

MARK x. 45.

The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many.

DISC. XIV.

THE Son of Man is the name which our Saviour chose to call himself by; and the reasons seem to have been, that this name expressed to others and to himself the share and concern he had taken in human nature in becoming man himself. It implied that this was not his *only* nature, but that he was much more than he

DISC. XIV. ſeemed to be. The whole paſſage, with the uſe our Saviour makes of it, to teach his diſciples and all other perſons the reaſon they have for humility, is not unlike that of St. Paul to the Philippians; "Let this mind be in you, which "was in Chriſt Jeſus; who, being in the form "of God, thought it not robbery to be equal "with God, but" diveſted himſelf of that glory, and "made himſelf of no reputation, and took "upon him the form of a ſervant, and, being "found in faſhion as a man, he humbled "himſelf, and became obedient unto death, "even the death of the croſs:" only it is not expreſſed here by St. Paul, for what end and for what reaſon it was, that he humbled himſelf ſo far: but that it was not only to teach us, or to give us an example of the greateſt humility; (though this may be one good uſe to be made of ſo great a thing; and this our Saviour himſelf preſſes upon us) but there muſt have been ſome other and deeper reaſon why this was done: and he has ſaid that he did not come only to teach

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us by his infinite condeſcenſion; but he tells us a real uſe of this in itſelf: "he came to give his "life a ranſom for many;" *i. e.* as many as will embrace this great inſtance of God's concern for them, and be moved by it to have a truer and more real concern for themſelves. But ſtill, the real reaſon, and the neceſſity of this was, that ſo great, ſo high a perſon, ſhould join himſelf entirely to our nature, not only to converſe with us in a ſuitable manner, to bring us to ſee in him a divine and perfect goodneſs, and to give us his laws and precepts, but really, according to the ſcriptures, for this other end, that, by being a man, and performing in our nature what we ought to do; and then ſuffering what we deſerved, that he might be a perfect interceſſor for human nature, and might have a right to releaſe us from God's juſtice and ſeverity, who could not bear with us, nor poſſibly be reconciled to us as we were: (for ſo the ſcripture teaches us moſt plainly) but now he is reconciled. DISC. XIV.

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DISC. XIV.

We may think it ſtrange and difficult, that God could no otherwiſe be reconciled; or that, for ſome reaſon, it was impoſſible by any other means to redeem us from puniſhment, or from the miſery of ſin into which we were fallen. It is perhaps too much for us to underſtand; and it is better we ſhould admire it. I will, therefore, leave it to your own conſideration, rather than endeavour to explain it. But another thing is plain, which at all times it may be proper to dwell upon; that, as this doctrine appears in ſcripture, if we receive it as we ought, as it is taught there; if it was neceſſary that ſo divine a perſon ſhould die and ſuffer for us, then this will ſhew the great obligation that lies upon us now to forſake all ſin; becauſe our maſter and only Saviour gave up all his glory for a time: he diveſted himſelf of all, and took upon him the nature of man; and, more than this, the greateſt ſufferings of man, for our good. This, I ſay, muſt teach us an higher and truer kind of goodneſs, than was ever truly known or generally allowed,

allowed, or than we ſhould know without this. It muſt alſo teach us the trueſt condeſcenſion, compaſſion, and regard for others. For it muſt neceſſarily appear ſtrange, that we ſhould believe that the moſt excellent perſon took upon him all our ſufferings, and firſt of all our nature itſelf; which was ſuch infinite condeſcenſion, to bring himſelf down to be equal with us, that he might be one of us, our brother; and that we, when we profeſs to follow him, ſhould know no condeſcenſion to others of our own kind; (however inferior by outward accidents) or that we ſhould have no compaſſion or feeling for their concerns. It is expected and required, that we ſhould be partakers of the ſufferings of Chriſt. We ſhall be glorified with him hereafter, if we firſt ſuffer with him, it is ſaid. Now the ſufferings of Chriſt are not only theſe which he ſuffered upon the croſs: but it was beſides, his compaſſion, his feeling for men, and his great concern for our good, for which he undertook ſo much. In both theſe ſenſes the apoſtle ſays, that he filled

DISC. XIV.

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DISC. XIV.

up what was behind of the afflictions of Chriſt: for all his diſciples and followers were to ſuffer with him in this ſenſe certainly and always, if we are excuſed from the other. It is plain that there is a peculiar goodneſs taught us in Chriſt's example, as well as in his words and precepts. All this we ſhould perceive the force of more, if we could ſee the great and real neceſſity there was for what he did and ſuffered on our account.

I have obſerved that it is ſaid in ſcripture to be neceſſary for our ſalvation; that we could not otherwiſe be forgiven and accepted by God. Now, if the ſon of God has done ſo much, and condeſcended ſo far, on our account, we ought ſurely to take care of ourſelves and our own ſalvation. Out of gratitude and duty to God, we ſhould do whatever he requires. We ſhould conſider "in whom we live, move, and have "our being." We ſhould conſider the ſervice we owe to our gracious Maſter, to our moſt kind

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and heavenly Father. Do we then regard the law of virtue he hath given us? Do we refrain from intemperance, from all fraud and injuſtice on his account? If we break the laws of ſobriety, it is an injury to ourſelves: if we are unjuſt, or unreaſonable, or cruel, we injure other men. But the great and ſerious conſideration is, that we alſo offend againſt God, who overlooks, with a tender care, thoſe creatures whom he has made. It is to him, therefore, our firſt duty and obedience is due. We ought to take care to preſerve theſe faculties of our minds and bodies, becauſe God gave them to us: we ought to love men, and not to injure them, becauſe God made them, and they are his creatures, under his mercy and the hopes of his favour as well as we. DISC. XIV.

Now, as this is the way to know what ſin is, by conſidering that it is diſobedience to God; ſo how great the guilt of it is we ſhall know by conſidering what God is to us; or how perfect a right

DISC. XIV. a right he has to be obeyed and ſerved by us, to the utmoſt of our affection and power.

God is infinite in himſelf in all perfection, power, and goodneſs. Let us always conſider what God is, and what are our natural and unavoidable notions of him. If there is a duty to love or to honour any thing in this world; if there is wiſdom, or goodneſs, or power in men to be loved and honoured; what is this in compariſon of God? It is in him that every thing is perfect, and from him, whatever there is in any creature, comes. He is all goodneſs, all greatneſs, and all power: he is all things, in ſome ſenſe, according to an idea of ſome ancient philoſophers. Every thing elſe muſt diſappear and is nothing in compariſon of him. If God, therefore, for his excellence, requires our love, our honour, and our obedience, how can we refuſe it to ſuch perfection?

Then

Then there is another conſideration beſides this. If God is all perfect in himſelf, and the ſubject of all admiration, all love and all honour; ſo is his goodneſs to us ourſelves as great as we were capable of receiving. Every thing that we have or can hope for, comes from him. It is he that brought us into the world; that gave us all the faculties of our minds and our bodies; that thought fit to raiſe us above the other creatures. All his works ſerve us: his ſun ſhines, his rain falls, for our benefit chiefly, as well as for the preſervation of every thing in the world. The goodneſs of God to man above other creatures is eaſily ſeen. He hath put other creatures in ſubjection under our feet. They are made to be uſeful and ſerviceable to us. Then, as to every one of us in particular; what bleſſings have we received, even if we have not made a right uſe of them! Let every one conſider how he is preſerved continually, in the midſt of ſins, by that almighty power which we ſo much offend. Even the misfortunes and afflictions of this world are intended DISC. XIV.

DISC. XIV.

intended for our good. Whatever we are, it is from God. If our condition is hard in any reſpect, it might be worſe: and, whatever it is, we have great bleſſings; we have theſe minds which he has given us: we have the knowledge of him himſelf; which is the greateſt bleſſing of all: which if we would uſe, if we would come nearer to him with duty and affection, we could never be unhappy in any condition of this life. We have beſides his goſpel, his revelation to men from heaven: we have the hope of everlaſting happineſs ſet before us, which may well balance any miſery in this preſent life.

What then can we do better, than daily and hourly to think of God with grateful affection? It is true, "he is not worſhipped by men's "hands, as if he needed any thing himſelf:" our neglect of our duty cannot concern him for himſelf, as it might us weak creatures. But he is to be honoured the more on this account: for, though he does not want our ſervice; though

though he is infinitely above all that we can offer him; yet ſtill he made us, and gave us the bleſſings of this life, as well as the hopes and promiſe of a better. Though our prayers cannot avail him, yet they may be of infinite ſervice to ourſelves. We ought to know our dependence upon him; we ſhould honour him in our hearts; we ſhould praiſe him with our lips. Our firſt duty is to him; our next is to honour all men, to do good to them as far as we are able; but by no means to do wrong or injury to any. We have the candle of the Lord within us; we have the light and teſtimony of our own conſcience. Beſides this, we know from ſcripture, that God has always taught men their duty; that he has claimed their ſervice and obedience, which he alſo knew to be their happineſs: that, from the beginning of the world, he taught men to come to him with ſacrifices, to aſk his pardon and forgiveneſs, and with offerings to ſhew their thankfulneſs for what he gives and ſends them: that he appeared in ſuch man- DISC. XIV.

DISC. XIV.

ner as men could bear, to make them ſenſible of him. So it was in the Old Teſtament; in which we ſee the miraculous appearances of God; how he ſhewed his preſence and his power. And now at laſt he hath appeared to us in his ſon; whom he ſent to demand the fruits of our creation and our being; which is to ſerve him. He came the laſt to demand this. And, becauſe the world lay in ſin and miſery, he came beſides to obtain the mercy and forgiveneſs of God, and to declare them to us. "Thou ſhalt call his name "*Jesus*;" the meaning of which word is *Saviour*; "for he ſhall *ſave* his people from their ſins." We have now the wrath of God againſt ſin and his mercy declared together. Let us take theſe things into our moſt ſerious conſideration, and ſhew the good fruits of them in our lives and converſations.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XV.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL ON TRUE CHRISTIANS.

ACTS XXVI. 17, 18.

Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

THESE are the words by which St. Paul was commanded to preach the gospel. It is Christ himself, who speaks to him and says, "I have

DISC. XV.

 "appeared

DISC. XV.

" appeared unto thee for this purpoſe to make
" thee a miniſter and a witneſs both of the
" things which thou haſt ſeen and in the which
" I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from
" the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom
" now I ſend thee; to open their eyes, and to
" turn them from darkneſs to light, and from
" the power of Satan unto God; that they may
" receive forgiveneſs of ſins and inheritance
" among them which are ſanctified by faith that
" is in me."

The uſe which I ſhall make of theſe words will be to ſhew the *great power and effect of the gospel, and the great and happy change which it makes in the condition of those who truly receive it.*

It is ſaid, that the power of St. Paul's preaching the goſpel to the Gentiles ſhould be " to
" open their eyes." In our natural ſtate, and without the goſpel, we ourſelves were Gentiles:

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were it not for the goſpel, we ſhould be in the ſame ignorance that they were. The goſpel and the revelation of God open our eyes, by diſcovering to us things that are not ſeen or known, at leaſt with any clearneſs, by our natural reaſon and underſtanding. We ſee naturally the things of this world. We cannot ſee what there is beyond this; what happier ſtate there is, for which man was at firſt intended, and to which he will be reſtored. We do not ſee either the danger or the miſery that we are in by ſin. We do not ſee another world, another ſtate of things, in which angels are now, and men will be hereafter, when God will be preſent with us, and we ſhall be made perfect and be changed, that we may be able and fit to live in his preſence. This is as real and as true as the preſent world, but it is not ſeen with theſe our natural eyes or underſtanding. On the other ſide, the kingdom and power of darkneſs, that miſery and ſtate of puniſhment to which ſin will bring us, in which it will end, this is not ſeen naturally: our view

DISC. XV.

DISC. XV.

and our thoughts go no farther than this present world. It is revelation and the gospel that discover these things to us, and give us a sight and a wisdom beyond this world. It is, as when enemies came to lay hands on the prophet Elisha, an host compassed the city with chariots and horses, so that his servants said unto him, "What "shall we do?" Elisha answered, "Fear not; for "they that are with us are more than they that "are against us; and Elisha prayed, Lord, open "the eyes of the young man that he may see. "And the Lord opened his eyes and he saw, and "behold the mountain was full of horses and cha-"riots of fire:" *i. e.* of angels, who appeared as fire round about Elisha, to guard and to defend him from the power of this world. In the same manner are there many things invisible, which are seen only by faith in the gospel. Christ himself is our king and our God; he is present every where, and all power is given to him in heaven and in earth, though he is not seen nor known but by the gospel. And the evil spirit goes about

about, ſeeking whom he may devour, and leading men captive into ſin and miſery, though we do not ſee him, nor the danger we are in, till our eyes are opened. Secondly, The power of the goſpel, by which we are turned from darkneſs to light, is more than this of giving us greater knowledge. Light implies comfort and joy generally, in the language of ſcripture; and darkneſs, diſcomfort, ſorrow, and miſery. Thus the goſpel is ſpoken of in many places. "The people, that walked in darkneſs, ſaw a "great light; and to them, which ſat in the "region and ſhadow of death, is light ſprung "up." So, in the Song of Zacharias it is ſaid, that, "through the tender mercy of God, the "day ſpring from on high hath viſited us; to "give light to them that ſit in darkneſs and in "the ſhadow of death, and to guide our feet "into the way of peace." And Chriſtians are ſaid to be "a choſen people;" choſen and appointed for this end, that "they may ſhew forth "the praiſes of him, who hath called them out

DISC. XV.

DISC. XV.

"of darkneſs into his marvellous light." And ſo we find, that thoſe, who received the word, *i. e.* the goſpel, by the preaching of the Apoſtles, received it with joy and gladneſs; as it is natural that every man ſhould; for the goſpel is *glad tidings*, and brings us the news of our being received into God's favour, and having the hope of everlaſting life. Beſides this, we muſt obſerve that indeed at that time the Holy Ghoſt, the giver of life, comfort, and joy, was poured upon believers in an extraordinary manner, and in ſuch a degree as is certainly not to be expected at this time. It was by this ſpirit that the Apoſtles, and others with them, upon whom the Holy Spirit deſcended on the day of Pentecoſt, as they ſpoke in ſeveral languages, ſo the things which they ſpoke were the wonderful works, or the praiſes, of God, as we may ſuppoſe, "of who had called them out of darkneſs into "his marvellous light." And another time, when the Holy Spirit fell likewiſe upon Cornelius and his company, it is ſaid, that "they

"ſpoke

"ſpoke with tongues, and magnified and praiſed "God for his mercies;" *i. e.* they magnified, as the Virgin Mary did, when ſhe ſaid, by the ſame ſpirit of light and joy, "My ſoul doth "magnify the Lord, and my ſpirit hath rejoiced "in God my Saviour." The ſpirit of all thoſe firſt Chriſtians together was this, that "conti-"nuing daily, with one accord, in the temple, "and breaking bread from houſe to houſe, they "did eat their meat with gladneſs and ſingle-"neſs of heart, praiſing God, and having fa-"vour with all the people." But this ſo ſenſible a joy and gladneſs, and this real feeling of God's preſence among them, I would have you think, may not, with any aſſurance or certainty, be expected now; much leſs that it is neceſſary to being a true Chriſtian and to the having a well grounded hope of ſalvation and happineſs hereafter. It was the peculiar and extraordinary bleſſing of the goſpel at thoſe times, when Chriſt, being aſcended into heaven, thought fit to pour down his ſpirit and his bleſſing, in an extraordinary

DISC. XV.

DISC. XV.

dinary degree, upon thoſe who were his firſt fruits; the firſt believers in his name. What remains for ever the ſame is the doctrine of the goſpel, which teaches us that Chriſt came from heaven, and took upon him our nature for our ſakes; to reconcile us to God, to obtain forgiveneſs for us and the hope of eternal life; requiring us, for this reaſon, to love God, and to ſerve him, and not to behave in a manner unworthy of God's great mercy and kindneſs to us It is a kind doctrine which requires our ſervices from love, giving us the greateſt motives to love, and that does not rigorouſly require either troubleſome performances or a perfect and ſinleſs obedience.

And this is a reaſon both for love and joy, and comfort; and we know that God's ſpirit will never be wanting to us, to enable us to continue in our duty and to refrain from ſin. And we may hope in the practice of our duty to find our obedience grow more eaſy, and the ſervice

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of God the trueſt freedom, and the greateſt plea- DISC. XV.
ſure: but we muſt not be diſſatisfied or diſcon-
tented, if we do not find ourſelves enlightened,
or enabled in an extraordinary manner, ſuch as
we may read of the firſt Chriſtians. Much leſs
have we reaſon to deſpair, or not to think our-
ſelves within God's mercy, if we do not find
ſuch a feeling of it, as ſome think is neceſſary.
For God requires us to ſerve him even in diſ-
comfort, and not only in outward afflictions, but
without preſent great joy, though not without
hope. His great bleſſing, his perfect ſalvation
and happineſs are beyond this life. But indeed
this will be of ſervice to us, and it is what is
ſufficiently grounded in the ſcripture; that we
may hope ſome time, when God thinks fit, to
find our duty eaſier, ourſelves more enabled and
enlightened: but ſtill what we learn from the
goſpel is our duty founded upon the mercies of
God and the hope of ſalvation in another life.

After

DISC. XV.

After theſe two benefits of the goſpel, a better inſtruction and greater hope and comfort that it gives, the third and greateſt, is that by its arguments and by its ſpirit, thoſe, who receive it, are turned from the power of Satan unto God. I ſay by its arguments, becauſe it ſet before us every reaſon and motive that can have any influence upon the heart of man. It moves us by terror and by God's will, declared from heaven, againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of men: but it ſhews God's mercy as great as his juſtice: it invites us to come and receive forgiveneſs and the hopes of God's mercy and favour. With theſe reaſons, (the greateſt that can be given for any thing) there is God's ſpirit to make them effectual and to ſubdue our minds. By conſidering theſe, the juſtice of God and his wrath againſt ſin, then his mercy and readineſs to receive us upon repentance; theſe are the ſtrong reaſons, that alone, with God's ſpirit, can truly deliver men, and "turn them from the power of Satan unto "God:"

"God:" for ſo the goſpel ſpeaks of ſin. It teaches us that to be led by ſin is to be in the power and dominion of that evil ſpirit, and to belong to his kingdom, ſo as to be puniſhed with him; that there are theſe two kingdoms in the world, that of darkneſs and the evil ſpirit, and that of Chriſt; that to one or the other we muſt belong. By this inſtruction it will make ſin appear a terrible and fearful thing. And it ſhews its own great power and bleſſing, by which, upon repentance, "we are tranſlated "into the kingdom of God's dear ſon," by which in this life we have the hope, that when this life and world are paſt, we ſhall riſe to a better; and hereafter we ſhall for ever have happineſs greater than we can have in this preſent world. Hereafter we ſhall be made perfect in body and in ſpirit. All ſorrow ſhall flee away, and pain, and ſorrow, and death ſhall be no more. This life is but a ſhort time to continue in God's ſervice, and in the hope of Chriſt's coming and his ſalvation. Hereafter "He com-

DISC. XV.

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DISC. XV.

"eth in the clouds of heaven, and every eye "shall see him." Then the time of refreshing shall come from his presence; and to them, who in this life are in trouble, there shall be rest. It is natural to desire to have this now, and to enter into his rest even in this life; nor can it be denied, but some do in a great measure. But the rest, that is certainly promised to all, is that which is to come. This is the great hope of the gospel; and, for the sake of that happiness, "let "us run the race that is set before us;" not setting our hearts upon this world, but looking forward, and doing our duty here, with the hopes of happiness and glory hereafter.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XVI.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

LUKE XXIV. 45, 46, 47, 48.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.

IT is plain, that the Apoſtles were indeed witneſſes to all other things, which concerned the goſpel, DISC. XVI.

DISC. XVI.

goſpel, and particularly of the reſurrection. But as it may be proper for us to conſider what was the whole or the greateſt proof, that was given of our Saviour's reſurrection, or of his being now accepted with God, and empowered to be a real and effectual Saviour; for this purpoſe it is neceſſary to conſider, that the witneſs or teſtimony of the Apoſtles was by no means the chief or the greateſt proof, though it was as great a proof as it was poſſible any teſtimony ſhould be. For which reaſon our Saviour himſelf ſeems to lay ſome ſtreſs upon their words, and they themſelves profeſs and declare the character and honour which Chriſt had given. That they are his witneſſes, they ſay often in the *Acts*, and that their evidence, their teſtimony, is indeed conſiderable. 1ſt. This I ſhall firſt of all endeavour to ſhew;—

2dly. And then afterwards, that there were indeed much greater and more unqueſtionable proofs

proofs given, and ſuch as are fully ſufficient for conviction to every conſidering perſon. DISC. XVI.

And firſt of all I am to ſhew, that the teſtimony of the Apoſtles is indeed as great a proof as it is poſſible any teſtimony of men could be; and it will be ſo, if it appears to us, that in the things which they declared, they could not be miſtaken themſelves; and if, beſides this, they were as unlikely as it is poſſible any men ſhould be, willingly to deceive others.

Now, that they could not be miſtaken themſelves is plain firſt of all, becauſe the things they declared were ſuch as they had ſufficient means to be informed of with certainty; being things of which their ſenſes were to judge. So that in this reſpect they were as well qualified to be judges, as men of the ſtrongeſt natural underſtandings and the moſt improved learning. Our Saviour is ſaid to have given ſuch proofs of his being riſen, that they could not be miſtaken;

DISC. XVI.

for they not only ſaw but they felt and handled him, they converſed with him often, they knew him by all his marks. They muſt have invented all this, if it was not true: they could not imagine it, or deceive themſelves in things ſo plain, and ſo frequently repeated. It may, however, ſtill be ſuppoſed that in ſome part of theſe appearances, or in the firſt which they imagined, they were deceived by their own inclination and deſire to ſee them, or their expectation of them: becauſe this is ſometimes found, that men will think or imagine that they ſee, what they very much deſire, or have long expected to ſee. But that every ground of ſuſpicion might be cut off, it is very remarkable, what care is taken, that the Apoſtles ſhould have no deſire, or, which is the ſame, no expectation at all of the things which they ſaw or witneſſed; I mean, of our Saviour's reſurrection. You may obſerve, in reading the ſcripture, that they did not at all expect it. For, though our Saviour had often before his death told them both of his death and

his

his riſing again, yet they did not at all under- DISC. XVI.
ſtand how theſe things could be. They thought he was to be a Saviour who was not to die: and, when they ſaw him really taken, and in the power of his enemies, they forſook him, like men that were miſtaken and diſappointed. The reaſon of their forſaking him was, that they did not *underſtand* the things; for otherwiſe they were faithful and honeſt. And this is the true reaſon, that our Saviour, though he often had told them plainly what would be, yet ſuffered them to be in ſome ignorance of the nature of his kingdom, and the reaſons and neceſſity of his death; that, by their diſappointment itſelf, by their not expecting what afterwards they ſaw, we might have the greateſt and ſtrongeſt aſſurance that is poſſible that they could not be deceived themſelves: they could not imagine what they did not at all expect: (and in the condition in which they were, it is evident that no other nor leſs proof could have convinced them, than ſuch, as it is ſaid, was given, and

DISC. XVI.

that moſt naturally, or moſt ſuitably to their condition was required; for you know it is ſaid they did not believe others who told them; they all required themſelves to ſee him, and one of them, except he ſhould ſee the prints of the nails, and ſee and feel the real marks in the plaineſt manner, declared, he would not believe) ſo that they were certainly in this reſpect the moſt unqueſtionable witneſſes, having themſelves not been over forward, but convinced with ſome difficulty, and not but by the plaineſt proof. At leaſt ſo it appears by the hiſtory, which has itſelf all the marks of truth and nature, that it is poſſible any hiſtory or any account of any thing can have. There is no poſſibility of ſuſpecting from the hiſtory itſelf, that it is not exactly true; and for the reſt it muſt depend upon the integrity of the men, as far as it appears, and the nature of their purpoſe itſelf, whether they could have any inducement to be falſe witneſſes or be willing to deceive. Now they preached the kingdom of a Saviour, who himſelf had ſuffered,

and who was now in heaven, to return again, DISC. XVI.
and to reward thoſe who would receive and love, and obey him, but who, in the mean time, muſt continue in heaven, as they ſaid, and at a diſtance from this world. What room or ground could there be in this for a ſenſual or worldly mind to intereſt itſelf? If their Saviour and Maſter had ſuffered, and had indeed told them that they could not expect to be uſed better than he had been; what hope could they have to be excuſed; or how indeed could they expect any thing elſe in this world, and in reſpect of worldly things, but ſufferings? They might indeed well expect ſome other joys and rewards, not only future, or in another world, but even now it is very likely they might hope for his preſent ſupport, whom they knew and loved, whoſe preſence they had lived in, whoſe kindneſs and tenderneſs to them they had experienced ſo much. But it is impoſſible, while they preached him as ſuffering and dying for them, that they ſhould have any other hope or proſpect in this

DISC. XVI.

world, so likely as that of dying or suffering with him; which was plainly the prospect they had, and in which they were not disappointed. They suffered every thing, and endured it, as what they expected, and in hopes of another and better life. Their death shews they were sincere, but much more their whole life, consistent with their purpose, and their purpose itself so plainly different and inconsistent with every advantage, or pleasure, or temptation of this world.

They were, therefore, witnesses, as I said, the most unquestionable, and most deserving belief or credit, that it is possible to conceive. But notwithstanding that they were so, and that some stress, therefore, might well be laid upon their testimony, yet it cannot be supposed that a thing of this kind would be left to rely only on their evidence, or on the word and testimony of men, however credible. God indeed chose to use every means, as far as it could have any good effect,

effect, to give the proper and ſufficient proof. He would, therefore, uſe the characters and the teſtimony of men, as far as they could be proper to gain any credit to his own word: or rather, becauſe his word muſt be conveyed by the lips of men, and they muſt be the inſtruments of his kindneſs and gracious deſigns. It was neceſſary that they ſhould be proper perſons; that there ſhould not from them, be any failure or impropriety, any ground of ſuſpicion, or any objection or diminution to that moſt proper and real proof, which he himſelf would give. We are not, therefore, to think that all depends upon them, or upon their teſtimony, even when they are called witneſſes. It is true of the Apoſtles, as our Saviour ſaid of John the Baptiſt, they were burning and ſhining lights, and bore witneſs of him. He commends him at a proper time and inſiſts that his teſtimony ought to have been regarded. But yet he ſays he has a greater teſtimony than that of John: and, if the teſtimony or witneſs of men ought in ſome degree, DISC. XVI.

DISC. XVI.

and with certain qualifications, to be received, yet the witneſs of God himſelf is ſtill greater, ſo it is in reſpect of the Apoſtles. They were means and inſtruments neceſſary to be uſed; and it was beſt, that if any addition of credit could be from the character of men, it ſhould be gained. It was neceſſary that all ſhould agree, as it does in the evidence which God has given: but the greateſt evidence or teſtimony of our Saviour's reſurrection and of our own joined, of all the hopes and doctrine of the goſpel, is that which God himſelf has given by ſigns from heaven, or things done on earth, by the means of men receiving thoſe extraordinary powers plainly from him. What ſigns from heaven, what things on earth by divine power were theſe, which proved our Saviour to be riſen, to have aſcended into heaven, and to have received all power both in heaven and on earth? What proofs were proper for this we ſee moſt plainly in the ſcripture, in that part of all others the moſt remarkable, the Acts of the Apoſtles. For nothing was ever read

read of or conceived that is ſo divine, ſo perfect, ſo unexceptionable, and ſo worthy of God, as that ſeries or continued chain of things related there ſo clearly and ſo particularly; which is not read by many, and by fewer ſufficiently conſidered. For, if it was read with due conſideration, it is indeed irreſiſtible. But it requires conſideration: for ſuch is the proof, that God would give, ſuch as ſhall be perfectly ſufficient to thoſe who will attend to it; but ſhall not force itſelf upon all, or on thoſe, who are diſinclined or negligent. For which reaſon chiefly it was, that our Saviour did not think it proper to ſhew himſelf, or to appear, except to ſuch a number, as were ſufficient to be witneſſes, and to thoſe who had been his followers with good meaning, however ignorantly, and his friends; but not to the great body of the Jews, who had ſeen his miracles, and to whom he ſaid, that he would no more appear, till he ſhould come in another manner at his laſt great time. However it is remarkable that the Jews themſelves, the moſt obſtinate

DISC. XVI.

DISC. XVI.

obstinate of them, their Scribes and Pharisees, that they were convinced even against their will, and therefore were not at all the better for their conviction. We see this in the Acts of the Apostles, when, after the descent of the Holy Ghost even visibly and with the plainest signs and proofs, which must have had great effect; and when afterwards the Apostles perform their first miracle of healing the lame person in the most public manner. The thing was evident, they said "and that a great and notable mira-"cle was done by them, we cannot ourselves "deny: but, least it spread among the people, "let us terrify these men, and strictly charge "them to speak no more to the people in his "name." Again, afterwards, we see that this evidence is pressed upon them in the strongest manner, that they might be convinced, however unwillingly; as when they had put the Apostles in prison, and an angel releases them. They are not only released, and commanded to go to another place, as Paul and Silas were, when preaching

ing to the Gentiles, but they were bid to go to the temple, and to preach publicly in the ſame name, to declare the reſurrection of Chriſt and his authority. The Jews themſelves were then terrified; they ſent for them, but not now with force; and ſay, "Did we not charge you that "you ſhould ſpeak no more upon this ſubject? "And now you have filled Jeruſalem with his "doctrine, and intend to bring this man's "blood upon us!" When they ſay this, it is evident that they are in anguiſh, moſt perfectly convinced and afraid, and yet not at all amended, nor better diſpoſed to the goſpel. I obſerve this, becauſe, as it is in ſcripture, it is the ſtrongeſt and fulleſt anſwer to every objection, or queſtion, that can be aſked, why he did not appear to all the Jews at Jeruſalem. If he had appeared, as a man, and with no other ſigns of divine power and authority, than he had ſhewn before, it is moſt probable that they would have crucified him again: for now by other means than by ſeeing him, by ſeeing thoſe miracles performed DISC. XVI.

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DISC. XVI. in his name, in proof of his reſurrection and power, which were proofs full as convincing, they are convinced, and yet do not believe, nor are at all bettered by the conviction. But, though this was done to the Jews, though theſe extraordinary miracles were ſhewn in Jeruſalem; and though the evidence was preſſed upon them to this degree, yet it never was ſo any where elſe. To the Gentiles it was proved, by the ſame miracles from heaven, the gifts and powers of the Holy Ghoſt on thoſe on earth: but it was not preſſed upon them. The reaſon of this difference, we may well judge, was this; it was neceſſary it ſhould be preſſed to the Jews: for, according to the notion of ſcripture, it may be ſaid, that they deſerved, by having withſtood ſo many miracles and proofs of divine authority, they deſerved this to be preſſed ſtill to make their obſtinacy and their guilt appear the more: and this indeed was neceſſary for us to ſee that they were convinced. But this is not the manner, in which, by the wiſdom and goodneſs of God,

God, the goſpel was to be proved to others. But ſuch proof was given, as is to all ſufficient, and is now, as much as ever, irreſiſtible. But it was intended by all that appears that it ſhould require conſideration, and that all, who chooſe to avoid, ſhould not be *forced* to believe or to aſſent to things, to which they have no inclination. And this is what ſhould now be conſidered; that there is indeed an inclination or a good diſpoſition of mind, that is neceſſary for believing the goſpel, and that this ſhews the excellence of it; that it has things that cannot be underſtood by the beſt underſtanding, but muſt be reliſhed by the diſpoſition and the heart. Such are the greateſt things of the goſpel: as for inſtance, that of our Saviour or a divine perſon's dying for ſin, as a ſacrifice for it. This is what no good underſtanding will ever deſpiſe or oppoſe; becauſe right minds know, that the juſtice or goodneſs of God, or his meaſures of juſtice or mercy, are too great a ſubject for us poſitively to determine. But for the ſame reaſon, DISC. XVI.

that

DISC. XVI.

that we cannot contradict or oppose it, we cannot measure nor judge the great things, or perceive that it was necessary by what we see ourselves. But it was by what we see in scripture, and the great use and importance of it as the greatest discouragement to sin, as the clearest instance to shew God's justice as well as his mercy; to lead us to fear as well as to love God; and to bring us to that due temper, in which both those affections are joined; that it has every motive in it that is proper and may be able to affect us. But the necessity of such a sacrifice and atonement is one instance of a thing which least can be proved or clearly judged by our understanding. It is indeed what no one can despise. But here it is that good disposition and humility must come in. Where reason fails, we must submit to the wisdom and counsel of God; having proofs of every thing that it is possible should be proved: for of our Saviour's full authority to teach and to instruct us, and of his resurrection itself, there

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is the cleareſt proof. But that he is our Saviour in the moſt real ſenſe, and that he died for that reaſon, this we ſubmit to upon his word, and indeed to it by all the other proofs, and we muſt accept of his ſalvation by thoſe means and in the manner in which it is offered. DISC. XVI.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XVII.

THE SIN AND DANGER OF IMMORALITY AND UNBELIEF.

II. THESS. I. 8.

Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

DISC. XVII.

IT is Christ, who, it is said, shall appear in judgment, "in flaming fire, taking vengeance "on them that know not God, and that obey "not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

My design is from these words of the Apostle to endeavour to shew you the great danger of

of not believing or not receiving the gospel, as it is plainly declared to us in the scripture. (For to receive the gospel is first of all called obedience, or a subjection of our minds to the wisdom and goodness of God, which is above ours, and which our own wisdom and, perhaps, the opinion of our own goodness, or of some worth and goodness of our own, is apt to resist) And then, if we receive and believe the gospel, the great guilt and danger of not being obedient and conformed to it to the utmost of our power in our lives and our affections. And for this purpose I am to shew in what manner and how perfectly the gospel is proved to be truly the word of God and a message from heaven to call men to true wisdom and goodness. DISC. XVII.

1st. That it is proved to be so most plainly and perfectly, first of all, by the miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles: those which they worked, or those which were extraordinary signs

DISC. XVII. from heaven, confirming their word, and ſhewing that it was indeed the word of God.

I make a difference between theſe two for clearneſs' ſake, and becauſe they are ſo diſtinguiſhed in ſcripture; the ſigns from heaven being ſuch as were manifeſtly from above, as the divine things at our Saviour's birth, or the voice from heaven, which was heard ſpeaking to him: or in the acts and preaching of the Apoſtles, the great and extraordinary effects of the Spirit of God ſent upon men; eſpecially when it was ſent immediately from heaven, and not by their word, ason the day of Pentecoſt: or perhaps all the gifts and miraculous powers of the ſpirit may be conſidered as ſigns or miracles from heaven: and miracles plainly may be reckoned thoſe which were done on the bodies of men, or in other effects, ſuch as healing the lame, or blind, which were done by the Apoſtles or upon their word. Now of the ſigns from heaven, the divine effects and appearances at our

our Saviour's birth we will paſs over, and will come directly to thoſe miracles or acts of power and goodneſs, as they generally were, which he did upon earth. And I will ſpeak of theſe, and bring them into your memory, as plain and moſt certain proofs of our Saviour's own divine power, if he claimed them to be ſo, or elſe of a divine power attending him, and confirming all his doctrine. DISC. XVII.

Now, it is certain there never was ſuch a ſeries of great and extraordinary things ſo beautifully and ſo wiſely ordered at the ſame time, ever written or ever imagined, ſuch as that was which we ſee in the Evangeliſts, or in the hiſtory of our Saviour's life. He began and he ended in Jeruſalem: and theſe are plain reaſons of wiſdom and goodneſs, why moſt of his miracles were wrought in another part of the country, that was diſtant from Jeruſalem, but yet within their knowledge. And we read of the Scribes and Phariſees coming down from Jeruſalem, and

DISC. XVII. being preſent, when they were performed. And it was in the moſt populous part of the country, which was Galilee. Here, it is ſaid, that he went about teaching in the ſynagogues, and preaching the goſpel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of ſickneſs and all manner of diſeaſe among the people. And his fame, the rumour of him, went, it is ſaid, throughout all Syria; *i. e.* the country beyond Galilee; and they brought unto him all ſick people that were taken with divers diſeaſes and torments, and thoſe that were poſſeſſed with devils, and thoſe that were lunatic, and thoſe that had the palſy, and he healed them. And another time it is ſaid, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and ſhewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. It appears that this was not without miracles. Another time, he ſent his diſciples into every town and city, where himſelf would come; giving them power over unclean ſpirits, and to heal all manner of ſickneſs, and all manner of diſeaſe: and he ſaid to them,

them, heal the ſick, cleanſe the lepers, raiſe the dead. He commanded them not to be ſparing, but as they had received theſe great powers freely, to uſe them freely; which no doubt they did: though it is likely they were reſtrained or directed not to uſe their power wantonly or for ſhew, or to throw it away upon improper and unworthy perſons. Beſides this, in his laſt journey up to Jeruſalem, he did not go the direct way, but round about, to make his laſt viſitation the more extenſive. In all theſe journies, and wherever he came, he freely performed his miracles of healing and kindneſs to men, never refuſing, in any inſtance, where there was a proper perſon, and a miracle of healing or of goodneſs that was aſked. For where he did no miracles, it was becauſe of their unbelief; they would not aſk him properly; and, when he refuſed to ſhew a ſign from heaven, it was another thing, ſome extraordinary manifeſtation from heaven, which he did not chooſe; though ſuch things there were at his birth, and at his baptiſm: but DISC. XVII.

DISC. XVII.

ſuch things were not proper for the Son of Man to ſhew. But he choſe plainer and more beneficial things, the healing the ſick, the lame, or the blind: and it was to the Scribes and Phariſees, who tempted him, and who aſked him by way of trial, or tempting him, that this was refuſed. Theſe miracles were performed in the moſt public manner, before multitudes, generally in their ſynagogues, and before his enemies; as when they watched him, whether he would heal the man who had a withered hand in the ſynagogue on the ſabbath day. "Looking round on "them, with anger, he ſaid, which of you, hav- "ing an ox fallen into a pit on the ſabbath day, "will not endeavour to help him and to take "him out?" Then he bade the man ſtretch out his hand, and it was reſtored whole as the other. He reſtored the dead to life; the widow's ſon publicly, and in the ſtreets of the city, when he was carried out; and Lazarus, when he had been in the grave three days; in a public place, near to Jeruſalem and full of Jews, who were preſent.

But

But it was not in reſpect of ſickneſs, or to the bodies of men only, that he ſhewed this extraordinary power, as if it were confined to this; but he ſhewed the ſame power in other and in very different things: he fed five thouſand men with five loaves and a few ſmall fiſhes, making the meat and bread to grow in their hands, while they were eating it. And he ordered the diſciples afterwards to take up the fragments, that nothing ſhould be loſt. He calmed the winds and the ſea by the ſpeaking of a word. He rebuked the ſea, and ſaid to it, Be ſtill. He did this with *authority*, that it might appear to be by his word and at his will. At this the people wondered, as they might with reaſon; and ſaid what manner of man is this; for he commands even the winds and the ſeas, and they obey him? But the moſt extraordinary of all his miracles, and perhaps the moſt proper for him to ſhew, was his caſting out evil ſpirits, and relieving thoſe who were poſſeſſed with them. It was directly his purpoſe to defeat and to deſtroy the DISC. XVII.

Disc. XVII. power of evil ſpirits, and of the great enemy of man: he came to ſave us from that power which God ſuffers him to have for the good and trial of men; and which is not the leſs real, or the leſs miſchievous, becauſe at other times, and in other ages, it is by his poſſeſſing or blinding and darkening the mind, which is of greater conſequence. But this, the poſſeſſion of the body, was what God ſuffered to be then, and in ſo many inſtances more than at any other time, that the ill effects of evil ſpirits might be apparent, and that the power of one ſtronger than they might appear the more plainly. For which reaſon he forced them even to ſpeak, and to cry out who he was. "What have we to do "with thee, Jeſus! thou Son of the moſt High! "Art thou come to torment us before the time? "We know thee, who thou art;—the Son of "God!" which was the moſt extraordinary acknowledgment, and ſuch as muſt have had the ſtrongeſt effect upon thoſe who were preſent. And though he thought fit to check them from

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ſaying too much, yet we may ſee that what they ſaid was no more than he intended they ſhould ſay: it was neceſſary that the devils, who were thrown out, and the men who were healed from any ſickneſs or infirmity, ſhould ſpeak, though ſometimes he thought fit to check them; of which there are plain reaſons of wiſdom and goodneſs. For if thoſe, upon whom his power was ſhewn, had not been ſuffered to ſpeak, as himſelf ſaid once, when the children ſung Hoſannahs, on his going the laſt time to Jeruſalem; if theſe are not ſuffered to ſpeak, the ſtones themſelves would cry out. It was impoſſible that ſuch virtue and goodneſs ſhould be concealed.

2. But it was not only power that he intended to ſhew by his miracles. Beſides his power, they ſhew his wiſdom and prudence, his ſincere and moſt genuine goodneſs. Such goodneſs, as was fit to ſhew and to convince us that God himſelf is truly good, and that the goſpel is the meſſage to men of his love and goodneſs. There might have

DISC. XVII.

have been many other things more ſtrange, more extraordinary and aſtoniſhing than our Saviour wrought; but thoſe he did not chooſe: he choſe the healing the ſick, the lame, or the blind; that we might have true faith and truſt, that we ſhall never receive any ill from him, but that he will be merciful and good to us, if we will truſt to his goodneſs, if we will love him and ſerve him faithfully.

He could have removed mountains, if he had choſen it, and put every thing in the world out of its place; but theſe were not the things which he choſe. And is it not plain, that this was better, as he choſe it? And is it not now to us the more convincing proof, that he was a divine perſon and came from God; ſince it was neceſſary that he ſhould work miracles? For without them, he ſays, they would not believe. He choſe thoſe, that cauſed the leaſt diſturbance, or the leaſt interruption in the courſe of the world, and yet did the greateſt good. For ſuch were his

miracles

miracles of healing the ſick, the lame, and the blind, or of feeding thouſands by an inviſible power, but with real effect; or his calming the winds and ſeas, which he did with ſpeaking a word, and which he choſe to do with authority, that it might be obſerved the more to be his power. And beſides the things which he choſe, which were the beſt and propereſt, there is another proof of his wiſdom and goodneſs in the diſpoſition of his mind, and the manner in which they were done. Particularly in this, that he does not do them with any oſtentation, but ſometimes the contrary; that he ſeems ſometimes to conceal them, to prevent their being too much talked of, but that in general he always does them, as is proper according to the occaſion; ſometimes making difficulties; as to the Syrophenician woman, or to the Centurion, who were ſtrangers; ſometimes granting readily, as to the leper, who ſaid, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canſt "make me clean:" To whom he anſwered, "I "will, be thou clean:" or when ſometimes he charges

DISC. XVII.

DISC. XVII.

charges thoſe, who were healed, not to ſpeak of what had been done, upon which it is ſaid that they publiſhed the miracles ſo much the more: or when at any other times he ſends them as his witneſſes, "Go and ſhew thyſelf to the prieſts;" or "Go home to thy kinsfolk and to thy friends, "and tell them what things God hath done for "thee." I ſay, by all theſe things, if we will read the ſcripture, the hiſtories of what our Saviour ſaid and did, we ſhall ſee that he was wiſe and good: we ſhall ſee that in his miracles he not only manifeſted his power, if that is meant by his glory, but the moſt gracious wiſdom and goodneſs, which is truly divine, and ſhews him to be from God, or that he was indeed a divine perſon.

It comes in naturally to ſpeak here likewiſe of the Apoſtles of our divine Lord and Saviour. I ſhall however paſs over that firſt and extraordinary miracle or ſign, which was plainly from heaven, when the Holy Ghoſt reſted upon them with a viſible

visible appearance, and produced those great and extraordinary effects. I shall not dwell now upon this extraordinary sign from heaven, because there is a particular day appointed by our church for the consideration of it. The first miracle done by the Apostles will be sufficient to shew, that they had indeed a divine power attending them; and that they did these great things, merely as instruments, in the hands of God. When Peter and John went up together to the temple, there was a lame man, lame from his birth, who sat to beg alms at the gate of the temple they were going to: "and, as they were "going, he asked an alms: and Peter, looking "earnestly at him with John, said, Look on us. "Then Peter added, Silver and gold have I none; "but, what I have, that I give unto thee: in "the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and "walk. And immediately his joints and ancle-"bones received strength, and he sprung up, "and walked." When the people came together, and were amazed at the thing that was done,

DISC. XVII.

DISC. XVII. done, (for the lame man was well known) they said; "Ye men of Israel, why do ye wonder at "this, and look upon us, as if we had done it "by any virtue or power of our own? It is "Jesus Christ, whom you have crucified, and "our believing in him, that has done this thing. "And now I know that through ignorance ye "put him to death, as did also your rulers. "But these things which God had spoken by his "prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so "fulfilled." This miracle was done to prove that Jesus was risen from the dead. For his raising himself from the dead was not only the proof of the gospel, but part of the gospel itself, since our rising immediately follows as a consequence: and so they preached through Christ the resurrection from the dead, which is the joyful news, and glad tidings of the gospel; and to prove this, this and every other miracle is worked. This miracle itself was so brought in view to the Jews, and so pressed upon them, that they could not deny it, nor the consequence, which was, that

that Chriſt was riſen. "That a notable miracle "has been done by them, we cannot deny;" but let us endeavour by threats to terrify them, and prevent their ſpeaking. So ſtrongly was the goſpel proved, that they acknowledged it, who were not converted, nor inclined to receive it but convinced. And after this ſuch miracles were wrought, that from all the country round they brought ſick perſons, and placed them in the way, that perhaps "the ſhadow of Peter paſſing "by, might overſhadow ſome of them." But the Jews, even when convinced and in terrors, could not ſubmit, but perſecuted and oppoſed. And there cannot poſſibly be conceived a more convincing proof than this is now to us: and therefore afterwards, though the miracles were done, wherever the Apoſtles went, yet they were not preſſed as they were in this caſe of the Jews; but men were left with a way to eſcape the conviction, if their hearts were not prepared and willing to receive it. Such was the wiſdom and goodneſs, as well as power of God in the goſpel.

DISC. XVII.

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DISC. XVII.

We cannot ſay the goſpel is not proved. Indeed the excellence and goodneſs of the goſpel itſelf is another and the ſtrongeſt proof of our guilt and danger, if we ſtand out and refuſe to receive it: for we muſt perceive that we ſtand out againſt the infinite goodneſs and grace of God which is ſhewn to us in the goſpel, that it muſt be the greateſt corruption of heart, that refuſes to be moved by ſuch goodneſs. But this I muſt endeavour to ſhew in my next Diſcourſe.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE SIN AND DANGER OF IMMORALITY AND UNBELIEF.

II. THESS. I. 8.

Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

IN my former discourse on these words I endeavoured to shew the guilt and danger of not believing the gospel, and of not obeying it in our lives and actions, from this reason, because it was proved by such greatness of miracles, the plain signs of God's power confirming it; proved beyond all doubt to be his word, and a call from

DISC. XVIII.

DISC. XVIII.

heaven, to men. I ſhewed this both from the miracles of our Saviour himſelf, while he was upon earth; which, I ſaid, are now to us the moſt convincing proofs; becauſe they are not only acts of power, but of wiſdom and goodneſs at the ſame time, eſpecially in the manner in which our Saviour did them: without oſtentation, I ſaid, and yet freely, without reſerve, never refuſing, in any inſtance, to perform a miracle, when it was aſked with a right diſpoſition, ſo that it would be ſuitable for him to grant it. After his death, the ſame deſign was carried on, and his reſurrection, to be a real Saviour to us, proved, in the ſtrongeſt and moſt convincing manner, not only by ſuch extraordinary things as were immediately from heaven, ſuch as the deſcent of the Holy Spirit in a viſible appearance, and with ſuch viſible and extraordinary effects immediately upon the Apoſtles and the whole number of believers, on the day of Pentecoſt; not only by ſuch extraordinary ſigns, which were ſaid to be from heaven, but by miracles,

racles, by acts of power and goodneſs ſhewn among men by his Apoſtles, not in their own name, but in the name of him whom they preached: which, therefore, were done with ſuitable humility, and with faithfulneſs and juſtice to him who employed and enabled them, I ſhewed you in what manner one of theſe miracles was done, and what effect it had, with other miracles, upon the Jews though obſtinate, and perſiſting in unbelief or in diſobedience and oppoſition to the goſpel; that they ſaid, they could not deny it; they were convinced, but not converted or changed: which, though unhappily for them, is now to us the ſtrongeſt and moſt unqueſtionable proof of the truth and power of the goſpel that could poſſibly be given. If the Jews had not oppoſed our Saviour, the goſpel might have been thought to be a contrivance of theirs: or, if they had been all converted, and had believed after our Saviour's death, there might have been ſome doubt, That they ſhould be convinced by the force of

DISC. XVIII.

DISC. XVIII.

truth, and the plain appearance of divine power, and yet oppoſe and fight againſt it, is the ſtrongeſt and moſt unqueſtionable proof of the truth of the goſpel. Now theſe things are all plain before us: we may ſee and read them ourſelves; and we likewiſe have them publicly read to us. Every one knows them ſo far, that, if he does not know them ſufficiently, he cannot be excuſed for not deſiring and endeavouring to know them more. By the voice of the goſpel, which ſounds in our ears, God calls men every where to repent, and to live ſuitably to their own reaſon and underſtanding as well as to his word. God himſelf hath now taught us in what manner we are to live; and therefore it is at our greateſt peril and danger that we diſobey him; becauſe it is to diſobey his word, his call from heaven.

This, therefore, is one great point, that we muſt conſider *how guilty we are before God, to live in continual disobedience to him!* When he has taken ſo much pains, as we ſee by his goſpel,

DISC. XVIII.

goſpel, to ſend his meſſages to us, and to prove their coming from him to us. But another thing there is in the goſpel, that deſerves to be conſidered ſtill more, as the ſubject or occaſion of our guilt, if we diſobey or neglect the call of God to us; which is that the goſpel is the effect of the higheſt kindneſs and love of God to men; that it lays us under infinite obligations to his goodneſs and mercy; and therefore not to believe the goſpel is to diſbelieve the goodneſs of God; not to be moved by it to ſuitable effects is to be hardened and to be dead in ſins. And to fall ſhort of its benefits and mercy muſt generally be owing to ſome great conceit or opinion of our own worth and goodneſs; that we have ſomething of our own that is good, and that we do not want ſo much mercy and forgiveneſs, or ſo much aſſiſtance and ſupport from God, as the goſpel declares and promiſes to us.

DISC. XVIII.

I ſhall endeavour, therefore, to ſpeak of theſe things ſo far, as may convince us, in ſome meaſure, in what guilt, and in what danger, we are, if we refuſe or neglect the mercy of God, ſo as not to be moved by this to repentance and obedience ſuch as is ſuitable to thoſe to whom mercy is ſhewn.

In the firſt place, the mercy of the goſpel, God's kindneſs and love to men, appears in this, that forgiveneſs and acceptance are declared to all, without any exception, who will come in and accept their ſalvation upon the terms, and with the diſpoſition, with which it is offered. There is no one ſo ſinful as to be beyond the reach of the infinite mercy and forgiveneſs of God, if he is moved by his mercy to repentance, and accepts the mercy offered him with thankfulneſs for Chriſt's ſake. The mercy and kindneſs of God is great in another reſpect, that it is offered to all: to thoſe, who ſeem to be juſt and good, and who are in many reſpects better

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DISC. XVIII.

in their lives and diſpoſitions than thoſe who are guilty of open and preſumptuous ſins. In order to ſhew mercy to theſe, it was neceſſary that the goſpel ſhould teach firſt, that all are ſinners, and fall ſhort of the perfection and integrity of heart which God requires; that there is no real holineſs and goodneſs, but that which will ariſe in us from a ſenſe of God's favour and mercy; when we no longer truſt in ourſelves, but when we are ſaved by him, and therefore love him and ſerve him only and not ourſelves. To make the mercy, and favour, which it brings, general to all, it was neceſſary it ſhould convince us all to be under ſin, that it might have mercy upon all. But this is difficult, as will be ſhewn, as you yourſelves may conſider. It is difficult for thoſe who have avoided many ſins, not to think that they are better even before God, and in their hearts, than the open ſinners, and thoſe whom even the world condemns. But in this it is neceſſary to examine ourſelves, our inward diſpoſitions and ſecret thoughts; to con-

DISC. XVIII.

ſider, whether what appears good in us is not really from other reaſons; as from fear of ſhame and reproach before men, or from inward conſciouſneſs and pride in ourſelves, and not from duty or the love of God. If it is ſo, it is not goodneſs: we want not only forgiveneſs, but grace to mend our diſpoſitions and to purify our hearts. Now this is all offered to us in the goſpel, if we will accept it freely: it is offered to us, without any claim of merit, on our part, but that of throwing ourſelves wholly upon God's favour, and loving and ſerving him, as perſons forgiven and ſaved.

2. We muſt conſider again, by whom this mercy and kind acceptance with God was obtained for us, and in what manner. And in this reſpect we ſhall ſee our danger and our guilt the more, if we do not accept it, and live ſuitably to it.

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DISC. XVIII.

The mercy and kindneſs of the goſpel was obtained for us by him who came from heaven; who was a divine perſon, and took our nature upon himſelf, that he might be humbled and ſuffer for us; that he might redeem us from ſin and miſery, and raiſe us to his own glory, as far as we are capable, as he came down to our nature, and took all its infirmities and weakneſſes upon him. Now one reaſon why this is not believed, or not believed effectually and ſincerely, as it ought to be, when we conſider and remember how ſtrongly the whole goſpel was proved to be from God;—one reaſon of our unbelief or doubt concerning this, I fear, muſt be this; that it is too much goodneſs and too much condeſcenſion for us to conceive. We cannot conceive firſt of all, that we are ſo fallen or ſo unworthy before God, as to require ſuch a Redeemer to bring us into his favour; which is want of knowledge of ourſelves and of our real duty, by which we ſhould know our true condition: or, if we can think that we are unworthy, that we

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DISC. XVIII.

can do nothing to make ourſelves accepted; yet that ſuch a perſon ſhould condeſcend ſo much on our account, or ſhould come down ſo low, to raiſe up us to him, this is too much for our conception: we do not underſtand what *divine goodness* is, becauſe we are not good. So that unbelief of theſe great things muſt appear highly guilty and criminal, and deſerving all the cenſures of ſcripture againſt it, becauſe it is the diſbelief of things moſt plainly proved, the ſtanding out againſt the evidence of miracles and of reaſon: (for our reaſon ſhews the things as they are read to us in ſcripture to be true: for it was impoſſible that ſuch things ſo great, and related ſo ſimply and ſo conſiſtently, ſhould be invented) To diſbelieve is guilty or criminal, and deſerves the wrath of God, not only upon this account but for another; becauſe we want goodneſs, to enable us to conceive and believe the things that by the goſpel are declared to us. They are ſuch, as not only "eye hath not ſeen, "nor ear heard, but are ſuch as have not entered

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"into the heart of man to conceive." They are too great and too good for us. Our diſbelief of the goſpel is, therefore, criminal, when it proceeds from want of goodneſs, which would enable us to believe it. DISC. XVIII.

3. That when we believe theſe things in ſome manner, or cannot doubt of them, becauſe we ſee they are ſo plainly proved in the ſcripture by things of which there can be no doubt;—that when we believe them in this manner, yet they have not the due nor ſuitable effect, can be owing, as you may eaſily conceive, to nothing elſe, but to hardneſs of heart, that is not capable of being moved by the greateſt benefits, by the ſtrongeſt inſtance of mercy and kindneſs ſhewn to us from heaven; that we are not moved by theſe as we ought to be. For, if theſe things are ſo, it is evident they ought to move us more than any thing in this world, or any thing that we can conceive. For we can conceive nothing greater, nor ſo proper to affect us with the beſt affections

DISC. XVIII.

affections and diſpoſitions, as theſe things of the goſpel are. How guilty then muſt we be, if we can hear and believe that ſuch things are true, as are ſet before us in the goſpel; that a divine perſon, the Son of God, came into this world to redeem us from the miſery in which we were, and to raiſe us to glory and happineſs with him, by ſufferings and hardſhips, and by death itſelf; by taking upon him all the infirmities and reproaches of our nature, and the loweſt condition of men: I ſay how guilty we muſt be, if this ſhould have no effect upon us; if we believe it in any manner, and this convinces us not of our real unworthineſs and hardneſs of heart! We muſt have no heart, or no good affections at all, or elſe it is impoſſible but ſuch things would call them out. We ſee, therefore, from this, that we are dead before God. We muſt pray to him, therefore, to give us a juſt ſenſe, to give us an heart to reliſh and to comprehend the things which he hath revealed. For, if theſe things have no effect on us, it ought at leaſt to humble

humble us, and to teach us not to think that we are already good or perfect, or that we do not want a Saviour, the bleſſings and the mercy of the goſpel, as they are propoſed to us. DISC. XVIII.

One other thing, that will ſhew us the *guilt and condemnation of not believing, or of not living with affections and diſpoſitions ſuitable to the goſpel,* is this; that, when they have no effect upon us, we may think that we do not conceive them perfectly; or not in the full grace and mercy, in which they are ſhewn to us. It is indeed plain, that we ſeldom believe or conceive them perfectly and as they are. We do not think we are ſo much obliged, ſo much indebted to goodneſs and mercy for our hopes and our ſalvation as indeed we are. We do not think that we are of ourſelves unworthy: we compare ourſelves with others, to find that we have ſome advantages over them, that we are not ſo openly ſinful, nor in our hearts ſo wicked as others are. We do not ſee that towards God we are evi-

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DISC. XVIII. dently ungrateful, and unwilling to reſign ourſelves to his mercy and favour; that we chooſe to ſtand with him upon our own merit, or our own goodneſs of ſome kind or other; and by theſe means to keep ourſelves free and to be independent on him. Now this itſelf, if we will conſider, we ſhall ſee to be a pride that is really criminal and inexcuſable before God, whatever we may be to men, whatever good appearance we may make, though in many things we may be able to juſtify ourſelves, it is not ſo before God: it is not ſo that we can come to him. He knows our inward faults, if we do not ourſelves know them. Therefore we muſt not come to him in ſuch a manner; but in the way in which our religion and as our own church directs us. We muſt come humbly before him: and we muſt remember that this is not an humiliation only, that ought to be in his preſence, or when we come to his worſhip, but that we muſt live in ſuch a manner, or with that conviction of our unworthineſs before him real and perpetual

perpetual in us. That, therefore, we ſhould not think we want forgiveneſs leſs with God, than others do, who are more openly wicked. If then we know our innocence in worldly things and before men, we are to conſider that in reſpect of God we are unworthy; that we cannot hope for favour and acceptance, but by his power and the ſpirit of his doctrine. The goſpel hath ſet before us a new and better righteouſneſs than our own hearts and opinions can teach us. It cannot, therefore, be an indifferent thing, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear; whether we will accept of that way of righteouſneſs and goodneſs, which God's mercy and favour have ſet before us or not. DISC. XVIII.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XIX.

THE GREAT SIN OF NEGLECTING THE GOSPEL.

HEBREWS II. 3.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

DISC. XIX.

THE Apoſtle in other places, as it is well known, is very careful to ſhew the bleſſings and advantages of the goſpel above the other diſpenſations of God to men. In another part of this epiſtle, he ſays, "Ye are not come to the "mount that might be touched, and that burned "with fire, nor unto darkneſs and blackneſs, "and tempeſt, and the ſound of a trumpet,

"and

" and the voice of words; which voice, they DISC. XIX.
" that heard intreated that the word ſhould not
" be ſpoken to them any more; for they could
" not endure that which was commanded; ſo
" terrible was the ſight, that Moſes ſaid, I ex-
" ceedingly fear and quake. But ye are come
" unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the
" living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to
" an innumerable company of angels, to the
" general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born,
" which are written in heaven, and to God the
" judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men
" made perfect, and to Jeſus the mediator of
" the new covenant, and to the blood of the
" covenant, which ſpeaketh better things
" than that of Abel." For, though the death of him, who died for us, was the blackeſt crime in thoſe who were the authors of it; yet it did not cry out of the earth for vengeance or puniſhment, but was the means of mercy, forgiveneſs and favour upon his account who died for us. Then the Apoſtle adds, " See that ye refuſe not
" him that ſpeaketh; for, if they eſcaped not,

DISC. XIX. "who refuſed him that ſpake on earth, much "more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away "from him that ſpeaketh from heaven." Now it appears, that like this is the place, from which I have taken my text. For, after ſpeaking of the divine nature and excellence of him, by whom the mercies of the goſpel were obtained, the writer of the Epiſtle obſerves, "Therefore "we ought to give the more earneſt heed to "the things which we have heard, leſt at any time "we ſhould let them ſlip. For, if the word "ſpoken by angels was ſteadfaſt, and every "tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt "recompence of reward;" "*How ſhall we* "*eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?*" A ſalvation, which was obtained and declared to us, by ſo great a perſon, who is ſo able to ſave! and which was proved by ſuch great and extraordinary means; which "at the firſt began to "be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed "unto us by them that heard him; God alſo "bearing them witneſs both with ſigns and "wonders

" wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of DISC. XIX.
" the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will :"
i. e. the Apoſtles, who were the inſtruments of theſe great things (theſe gifts of the Holy Ghoſt) were not the diſpenſers of them according to their own will; but the Holy Spirit diſtributed his own gifts ſeverally to every one as he would! In theſe words we ſee the goſpel is ſaid to be not a law or a doctrine only, requiring us to love God and to ſerve him, with threatenings of his anger and puniſhment of diſobedience, and with promiſes only of the bleſſings, the peace and proſperity of this life. The greatneſs of this ſalvation is ſuppoſed to be underſtood; or is implied by the greatneſs of him, by whom it was procured and obtained for us, and by whom it was alſo taught and declared.

What I ſhall do at this time will be to bring firſt into our minds, what the benefits and the bleſſings themſelves of the goſpel are, which have been obtained and declared to us by ſuch

DISC. XIX.

a perſon and proved by ſuch extraordinary means, and what infinite goodneſs and grace appear in our Saviour's condeſcenſion to men, when he was upon earth, and the manner in which the goſpel was taught.

Then 2dly. How *great a ſin it muſt be in men to refuſe or neglect the goſpel*; which is to refuſe and to neglect all the demonſtrations of the greateſt goodneſs and kindneſs of God to men.

1ſt. Now the greatneſs of our ſalvation, of that ſalvation which was obtained and taught by our Saviour, appears firſt in this; that divine perſon, who came from heaven, and was born in human nature, in order to live and to converſe with men, and to ſuffer by them and for them; it was he, that obtained and procured for us, by ſuffering in our ſtead, a clear diſcharge and forgiveneſs of ſins, and a reſtoration unto the favour of God, which could not be otherwiſe obtained, or without this means, conſiſtently

ently with the holineſs, the purity and the juſtice of God. Without ſome ſuffering there can be no forgiveneſs. For he who ſins or offends willingly againſt God, or even againſt man, if he expects to be forgiven, muſt at leaſt feel ſome ſorrow for the offence: and in ſome caſes among men, the ſorrow of the perſon offending is not ſufficient, but the intreaty, the interceſſion of others, is required beſides, and perhaps prevails: but intreaty and interceſſion is certainly ſuffering for others, and is ſuppoſed to be done always with ſorrow or ſuffering for them, or elſe it has no effect. This is a plain thing, and according to the ſentiments of nature itſelf, however it may be made difficult by the ſubtleties of men and their diſpoſition to doubt or to diſlike any mercy or forgiveneſs, except upon their own merit. But it is what is ſeen every day in the world. We may, therefore, learn from nature to receive, or not to be averſe to this knowledge, that by the infinite mercy, and goodneſs of God, and at the ſame DISC. XIX.

DISC. XIX.

time by the infinite goodneſs and ſufferings of him who was worthy to be accepted for us, we are now, if we join our own ſorrow and humiliation, clearly forgiven and received into favour, and ſhall continue in this favour hereafter, if we continue and live in ſuch a manner, with that grateful love and obedience which ſuch mercy and ſuch goodneſs require and deſerve. It may eaſily be perceived, that ſuch mercy and goodneſs, ſuch means of reconciliation and forgiveneſs, will require moſt of all, that we ſhould accept it freely, and not think that we ourſelves, for any goodneſs or any good diſpoſition of our own, were worthy to be forgiven. If we are forgiven unworthily, in reſpect of ourſelves, we muſt ſerve with the more obedience, love, and gratitude: for the forgiveneſs and mercy received with God, the conſequence of our being forgiven and received into his favour, is infinite reward, or infinite ſalvation and happineſs. Infinite in ſome reſpects, though ſuch as will admit of degrees of juſtice and proportion. For,

it is according to our Saviour's argument, that if God called himself the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob; if he acknowledged them as his friends, or in favour and covenant with him; if they had been ever so prosperous in this life, much more if it appears that their reward was deferred, that they were sojourners and pilgrims in this world, they must rise again. This life to them was not worthy of God's goodness and kindness to give. For all, that are with him, all, that are his, all that he will acknowledge to be his, live, our Saviour says, will live for ever with God, when our sins are forgiven. When he can look upon us with favour, immediatly we are restored to everlasting life, for which we were at first designed and made capable. For neither his goodness, nor his power can fail to accomplish what he has designed, except we forfeit and fall from what he has intended for us. It is, therefore, now by the favour of the gospel, as the Apostle says, that "we are not come "to the mount that could be touched, nor

DISC. XIX.

DISC. XIX.

"to blackneſs and darkneſs and tempeſt; but "we are come to mount Sion, to the city of "the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem; to "an innumerable company of angels, to the "general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, "which are written in heaven; to God the "judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men "made perfect, to Jeſus the mediator of the new "covenant." This new ſtate of favour with God, our forgiveneſs, which was obtained by him, is that upon which all depended; our ſtate of ſin was the partition between God and man. When this was removed, his infinite love and mercy flowed in. But God is jealous, as it is ſaid in ſcripture, of his work, he will have the honour or the merit of his own work to himſelf. He has ſaid, that when we are thus ſet up in favour, we cannot continue, nor go on without him; that it is his character, his example only, by which we muſt govern and direct ourſelves. We muſt be humble, merciful and good, as he was, without returns. And we muſt have

his

his ſpirit to form and to enable us to perform his commands, his precepts of love and goodneſs, that we may love him firſt for his mercy and kindneſs to us; and then ſhall we be able to love others, and we ſhall be able to bear with ourſelves, when we know, that we are accepted and forgiven by God. DISC. XIX.

This is that great ſalvation of which the Apoſtle ſpeaks. It is an entire reſtoration, or a new work of God's, and it begins in the heart. For it is he, it is his power, and his ſpirit only, that can make us truly ſenſible of our wants, and willing to be ſaved by his mercy and goodneſs. And this is that at leaſt, which ſhews *how great our ſin is, and how great our danger, if we neglect or refuſe it.* It is to refuſe or to neglect the offers of mercy and goodneſs, we would enjoy our own pleaſures, our own intereſts and purpoſes; or we would at leaſt enjoy the ſatisfaction of not thinking we want ſo much the goodneſs and favour of God. We would fain be

our

DISC. XIX.

our own saviours; we think we have something that is worthy and valuable, even in the sight of God. We have powers and faculties in our nature, which, therefore, we call *our own*, though God has given them. But these are not valuable, nor worthy in God's sight, till they are made so by humility. It is the love of God for himself only, or for his goodness and mercy to us, that is the only thing that is worthy and good and valuable in his sight. Because mankind were fallen from God by an opinion or a desire of excellence of their own, a desire of being as gods themselves and their own masters; it was, therefore, necessary they should be saved in this manner, or according to the gospel by a divine Saviour, even our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XX.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

II. TIM. III. 14, 15.

But continue thou in the thing swhich thou hast learned, and been assured of; knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that, from a child, thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

IT is intended, at this time, firſt to ſhew the excellence of the ſcriptures, and particularly thoſe of the Old Teſtament, conſidering them according DISC. XX.

DISC. XX. according to the words of my text, in which it is ſaid, that "they are able to make us wiſe."

And 2dly. "that they are able to make us "wiſe unto ſalvation;" to our great and trueſt happineſs, both in this world and in that which is to come.

Firſt of all, therefore, I ſhall conſider the ſcriptures as being the beſt means of knowledge; ſuch knowledge as is moſt valuable and agreeable in itſelf, and which may be properly called wiſdom.

For let us conſider what it is that the Bible ſhews us: for by this we ſhall ſee that the knowledge which it gives is the trueſt wiſdom, or is by its own excellence the beſt and higheſt knowledge which we can attain.

I. Though the Bible, in ſome reſpects, is not one book, being written by different perſons, and

and at different times; yet, as it is all consistent in one design, that of promoting true religion and the happiness of men; so it has one general or chief matter and subject, which is the greatest and most worthy of our knowledge; being an history of God's extraordinary dealings with men; his extraordinary and peculiar government of men by rewards and punishments from the beginning of the world. How excellent this knowledge must be we may know first by considering what our ignorance would be without this, and then by considering the things which the Bible has revealed or set before us. As to what our ignorance would be without this, we must consider that in this natural world, though we can see the marks of God's wisdom and power in every thing that he has made, yet we want very much to know his will towards us ourselves and his goverment and designs towards men; which do not naturally appear. We know only that we are placed here, and that we ought to worship and honour him, who DISC. XX.

DISC. XX. who has made all the world, and made us ourſelves; ſo that to him we owe every thing. But in *what manner* we ſhould worſhip him, and what we are to expect, this is not ſhewn. Neither our own reaſon, nor any thing that we conclude from natural things, is ſufficient to inſtruct us. But here, in the ſcriptures, we have the hiſtory of God's own manifeſtations of himſelf from the beginning, his firſt creation of the world; in what order and manner it was; how he raiſed and produced every thing unto order and light out of darkneſs and confuſion; with what regard, and for what purpoſes, he made man; how he made him *after his own likeneſs*, and gave him dominion over all the beaſts and all other creatures of the world, and made the woman to be a partner with him and like himſelf. He placed them in happineſs till they loſt and forfeited this by diſobedience. But how was it after this? What does the ſcripture teach us that is worth our knowing and that will make us truly wiſe? It teaches us, that God

God did not entirely forſake the world, or withdraw his particular preſence or regard from men; but that he reſided and dwelt in ſome place, to which men brought their offerings; and that, therefore, he had himſelf appointed and ordered a religion ſuitable to the time and the condition of men. One part of this religion was the offering of ſacrifices: ſome by way of thankſgiving, for the continual bleſſings received; others, by way of prayer, for forgiveneſs of ſins; teaching them now, in the beginning, that it was neceſſary that ſome great ſatisfaction and atonement for ſin ſhould be made. We ſee the inſtitution of the ſabbath from the beginning. For, "when God had finiſhed his work, he then "bleſſed the ſabbath day:" he made it holy, "becauſe on that day he had reſted from his "work." We ſee there was a diſtinction obſerved, in that early time, of beaſts that were clean or unclean, that were proper or not proper, for ſacrifice; and that there was then a command to thoſe who were the children of God, DISC. XX.

DISC. XX. God, to avoid the ſinful and worldly part of men; not to make alliances with them, for fear of danger and corruption; which command was afterwards continued to the Jews. We ſee this remarkable thing, that there was then, in the earlieſt time, a people, or family, and children of God, which were thoſe who lived or walked with him in or near his preſence, or came to it with their offerings and worſhip, reverencing his laws and directions, and obſerving his commands; while the reſt of men, who are called the children of men, or of this world, were thoſe, who lived far from him; who did not chooſe to come to his light or his preſence, and did not like the ſubjection to his commands, but choſe to live a free life, as they thought, but ſubject more and worſe enſlaved to their own luſts and deſires. They minded worldly things only; they were induſtrious and ingenious, as it appears, in the inventions of arts for the pleaſure and convenience of this life; which is not itſelf blamed; but only it is intimated

mated to us, that, while they regarded theſe things, they forgot God; whom to know would be a greater knowledge, and that which ought to have governed them in their lives. We ſee that one perſon, who had eminently pleaſed God, was taken out of this world, to live with God, and to be for ever a proof of God's remarkable favour to true religion and goodneſs. We ſee afterwards the juſtice of God, and his hatred and diſpleaſure againſt all ſin; when, after ſuch warning by his ſpirit, and by prophets and preachers of righteouſneſs, ſuch as Enoch had been, and Noah was at the time when men would not be reclaimed, but went on ſtill in ſin and wickedneſs, he brought on, in the moſt remarkable manner, with due preparation, and exactly at a time appointed, that flood, which he had threatened. "When they were eating and "drinking," and going on in all violence and wickedneſs, "the flood came" on by his own power, "and deſtroyed them all." By the ſame ſcripture we know, that there will be no ſuch DISC. XX.

DISC. XX. thing as this again; for God has promiſed that there ſhall not; and we can have no other ſecurity. But, at the ſame time, we know, by the ſame means, by God's word, that there will be a judgment full as terrible as this; that the world, that now is, is reſerved for fire, when the day of judgment comes. What greater things or more worthy of knowledge can we have than theſe, if we conſider only the greatneſs of the things themſelves? But every thing is great and conſiderable which we know to be done, or ordered, or ſaid, by God himſelf: and theſe are the things which the ſcripture teaches.

We ſee afterwards the increaſe of mankind from the family which was preſerved. And it appears that God had left the world; *i. e.* his *peculiar preſence* had left it, and only appeared at ſome certain times. As when, by the terror of his appearance, he confounded the vain builders of Babel. The world now ſeems to have been left to their own notions of God; with

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the appointments beſides, which had been given, and the memory of things which had been: from which it might be expected that men would be kept in the true worſhip and ſervice of God. But, when they were gone into idolatry or the worſhip of falſe gods, he called Abraham to himſelf, to be the beginner and father of a people, who ſhould receive particular marks of his favour and providence, and be taught his will in a particular manner. We ſee firſt how God condeſcended to appear to, to ſpeak with, and direct and preſerve him, whom he had called, and his next deſcendants, till they were ſent into Egypt; where he ſuffered them to continue, till they increaſed in number. And, in his own time, when they were oppreſſed and afflicted in Egypt, he delivered them by his own power; in ſuch a manner, as is very proper for every one to read and conſider well; becauſe it will give us a true notion of that power of God, which is above his own laws and the common courſe of things, and which we are too apt to

DISC. XX.

DISC. XX. think is unalterable. But it is only what he has appointed, and what he can change and overrule whenever he pleaſes; for all things ſerve, and are ſubject to him. All the elements of things are his miniſters: "He made the ſea to "ſtand on an heap, and led his people through "the deep as through a plain and open country. "He fed them with meat from heaven: he "gave them water out of the ſtony rock: he "went before them in the appearance of a cloud "by day, and of a light, or fire, by night, and "led them in the wilderneſs, as a ſhepherd leads "his flock, till he brought them into the land "which he had promiſed to give them. And not "for their goodneſs, it is ſaid, but for the wick-"edneſs of thoſe nations who dwelt there, he "drove them out;" and ordered that they ſhould be deſtroyed; to ſhew his juſtice, his great hatred and his diſpleaſure againſt all ſin. We ſee afterwards the hiſtory of this people, for many ages, and God's dealings with them. By which we ſee that he is a God, who is not far off; or that

there is a ſtate of peculiar favour and covenant with him, which his own people enjoyed; who had always, or were never long, at leaſt, not till the time next before our Saviour's coming, without ſome ſign or token of God's immediate power and preſence, either by ſome appearance to certain perſons, as that in his tabernacle or temple; or elſe by miracles and prophets ſent from him. Now all theſe things are either in themſelves great and conſiderable, as moſt of them really are; or elſe, at leaſt, they are ſo, by ſhewing God's own words and actions, and his immediate regard and concern for men; ſo that they are indeed the things moſt worthy to be known: they are things that are the proper ſubjects of wiſdom; they make us wiſe in things that are great and inſtructive; and more valuable than the particular concerns of any man or the affairs only of this world: which all men think are of themſelves too low to engage all our thought and attention; and for this reaſon they deſire the knowledge of other things, or of things DISC. XX.

DISC. XX.

that are above this world, or our own mean and little part in it; the knowledge of which kind of things is generally called *wisdom*, and is by all, by the high and low, by the ſtrongeſt as well as the learned, coveted and admired in ſome degree: for nobody, or ſcarce any one, is ſo low, as to have no notions of any thing above his mere worldly care and buſineſs: or, if any is ſo, either he will perceive himſelf, or every one elſe will ſee, that he is wretched and miſerable: for man is a reaſonable creature, capable of knowledge. He ought not to confine his thoughts merely and entirely to worldly things or to his own part in them, if he is ever ſo worldly: for which reaſon the moſt worldly are often idle, and will have their pleaſures and amuſements; will do many things that are not for their intereſt, and talk and think of many things which do not at all concern them. If we want knowledge and wiſdom, therefore, let us, for this end, *study and read the ſcriptures*: where we ſee what has been the condition of this

world

world from the beginning, and what God has done in it; what great and wonderful things have been; ſo different perhaps, from every thing, that we may ſee in our own ſhort time: by which we ſhall be able to judge better of what is to come, and of what truly or chiefly concerns us. For this we cannot ſee nor judge merely from ourſelves, or from all the things or men in the world, if they do not look beyond themſelves, and know more than of the preſent time. "We" ourſelves "are but of yeſter-"day and know nothing." But if knowledge is good and deſirable even to all men, then the knowledge of ſuch things as are in the ſcriptures is the knowledge of things that are the greateſt and the beſt. And, therefore, we ſhould all endeavour to read theſe things and to remember them; and care ſhould be taken, that children, from the beginning, ſhould be uſed to them. For, beſides the hiſtories of things, which themſelves are inſtructive, we ſee the poſitive law of God and what he requires. And we read the DISC. XX.

DISC. XX.

good inſtructions and good judgments of men directed by God's Holy Spirit; ſuch as are in the Proverbs of Solomon and other books; and with theſe the good thoughts and pious affections of prayer, of thankſgiving to God, of truſt and dependence upon him; as in the book of Pſalms more eſpecially, and in other parts of ſcripture. Theſe are able and ſufficient to make us both wiſe and good. "They will make us wiſe unto "ſalvation," as the Apoſtle ſays, "through the "faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus." Therefore we ought to read them for ourſelves, and we ought to teach them to others; to accuſtom them to read them for their greateſt good. For it is only by theſe means that the knowledge of God and of our duty can be kept up in the world: without which what is the life of men? "Without "religion," as one has well expreſſed it, "it is like "a tale told by an idiot; full of ſound, ſignifying "nothing." This preſent life is a poor deſpicable thing, without the ſure hopes and proſpects of an hereafter, which revelation alone affords.

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We cannot then set too great a value upon that word of God, which opens to our view every thing that is kind and comfortable beyond it. DISC. XX.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXI.

REPENTANCE AND THE FEAR OF GOD NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

ACTS XIII. 26.

Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God; to you is the word of this salvation sent.

DISC. XXI.

THESE words are part of a very expreſs and earneſt diſcourſe of St. Paul: of which I will read to you the greater part; becauſe it will ſhew us what was that goſpel and that word of ſalvation which he preached. He was, with Barnabas, another Apoſtle, in the Jewiſh ſyna-

gogue,

gogue, upon the ſabbath day; and, after reading the Law and the Prophets, when the rulers of the ſynagogue ſent to them, that, if they had any word of exhortation to the people, they might ſpeak; "Paul ſtood up, and, beckoning "with his hand, ſaid, Ye men of Iſrael, and ye "that fear God, give audience. The God of "this people of Iſrael choſe our fathers, and "exalted this people, when they dwelt as ſtran-"gers in the land of Egypt, and with an high "hand brought he them out of it; and, about "the time of forty years, ſuffered he their man-"ners in the wilderneſs; and, when he had "deſtroyed ſeven nations in the land of Canaan, "he divided their land to them by lot. And, "after that he gave unto them judges, about "the ſpace of four hundred and fifty years, "until the time of Samuel the prophet. And, "when they deſired a king, God gave unto "them Saul for the ſpace of forty years; and, "when God had removed him, he raiſed up "unto them David to be their king: to whom

DISC. XXI.

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DISC. XXI. "also he gave testimony, and said, I have found "David, the son of Jesse, a man after my own "heart, which shall fulfill all my will." All this is said to call to their minds God's mercies and providence over them; and to lead them to hear of Christ their Saviour: for he says, "Of "this man's" (*i. e.* David's) "seed hath God, "according to his promise, raised up unto Israel "a Saviour, Jesus; when John had first preached "before his coming the Baptism of repentance to "all the people of Israel. And, as John fulfilled "his course, he said, Whom think ye that I "am? I am not he," the Saviour. "But be-"hold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes "of his feet I am not worthy to unloose." Then here he calls for their attention again: "Men "and brethren, children of the stock of Abra-"ham, and whosoever among you feareth God; "to you is the word of this salvation sent: for "they that dwell at Jerusalem, because they "knew him not, nor yet the voices of the pro-"phets, which are read every sabbath day, they

"have

" have fulfilled them in condemning him: and, DISC. XXI.
" though they found no cauſe of death in him,
" yet deſired they Pilate that he might be ſlain:
" and, when they had fulfilled all that was writ-
" ten of him, they took him down from the
" tree, and laid him in a ſepulchre. But God,"
ſaith he, " raiſed him from the dead: and he
" was ſeen many days of them which came up
" with him from Galilee to Jeruſalem, who are
" his witneſſes unto the people. And we declare
" unto you, ſaith he, *glad tidings*; (which is
the ſame word as *gospel*) " how that the promiſe,
" which God made unto the fathers, God hath
" fulfilled the ſame unto us their children, in
" that he hath raiſed up Jeſus again; as it is
" written in the ſecond Pſalm; hou Tart my ſon,
" this day have I begotten thee. And, as con-
" cerning that he raiſed him up from the dead,
" now no more to return to corruption, he ſaid on
" this wiſe; I will give you the ſure mercies of
" David. Wherefore he ſaith alſo, in another
" Pſalm, Thou ſhalt not ſuffer thine Holy One

" to

DISC. XXI.

" to ſee corruption :" which, he obſerves, could not be ſaid of David: " for he, after he had " ſerved his generation, by the will of God, fell " on ſleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and " did ſee corruption. But it was he, whom " God raiſed again from the dead, who ſaw no " corruption." Here, therefore, and now in the concluſion of his diſcourſe, he preached to them and declares the word of ſalvation through Chriſt plainly and very earneſtly. " Be it known unto " you, therefore, men and brethren," ſays he, " that, through this man," *i. e.* through that Jeſus Chriſt, who lived as a man, and died, " is " preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins; " and by him, all that believe are juſtified from " all things, from which ye could not be juſ- " tified by the law of Moſes. Beware, there- " fore, leaſt that come upon you, which is " ſpoken of in the Prophets: Behold, ye de- " ſpiſers, and wonder and periſh: for I work a " work in your days; a work, which ye ſhall " in no wiſe believe, though a man declare it " unto

"unto you." For it was indeed ſtrange that DISC. XXI.
God ſhould ſend his own ſon into the world, and deliver him up for us all; and ſtrange to them, that that Jeſus, whom they crucified, though they found no fault in him, ſhould now be declared to be their Lord and Saviour. But, as there was need, ſo they had the plaineſt ſigns given them, to ſhew that he was appointed to be the Saviour. The extraordinary things at and before his birth, the teſtimony of John the Baptiſt, the voice from God himſelf and ſign from heaven when he was baptized; his own preaching the goſpel afterwards, or the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; and, while he preached, his healing every diſeaſe and ſickneſs among the people; his making, by a word, the blind to ſee, and the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear; his calling the dead to life; theſe were the plaineſt ſigns to mark and ſhew that he was the Chriſt, as well as propereſt in their nature to lead them to expect life and ſalvation in his name. Then, after his dying, which he needs muſt, to make

DISC. XXI.

it poſſible for God's holineſs and juſtice to forgive our ſins; his own riſing from the dead ſhewed, that he did not die, as other men, for his own ſins but ours; and that he was indeed the Saviour, in whoſe name the forgiveneſs of ſins, and our riſing to life and immortality, we being reconciled to God in him, ſhould be declared to all the world. That he was riſen from the dead, they could require no plainer proofs, than the miracles which the Apoſtles wrought in his name; their likewiſe healing the ſick and maimed, and raiſing the dead to life, upon their ſpeaking in the name of Chriſt; and the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt ſhed down in ſo wonderful a manner; which were then ſo extraordinary, that there could be no doubt, and ſuch as would not be ſpoken of, if they were not true; to confirm for ever and to all the ages the truth, that Jeſus is the Chriſt, for whoſe ſake, whoever truſts in him ſhall be forgiven and be accepted with God. This, it cannot be doubted, was that word of ſalvation which St. Paul preached in this earneſt

earliest and very express discourse, as well as wrote of in all his epistles. It is plain what is aimed at all along, and what is laid stress upon in this discourse. "Of this man's" (*i. e.* of David's) "seed, hath God raised unto Israel a "Saviour which is Jesus: and we declare unto "you glad tidings; how that the promise, which "was made unto the fathers, the same God ful- "filled unto us their children, in that he hath "raised up Jesus from the dead." And the conclusion of all his discourses is this; "Be it known "unto you, that through this man, who died, "(through Christ) is preached, or declared unto "you, the forgiveness of sins; and by him all "that believe are justified from all things from "which ye could not be justified by the law of "Moses. And beware, says he, least that come "upon you which is spoken of in the prophets;" *i. e.* unbelief, despising or rejecting this grace of God, and the means of salvation offered to us; either by living in all ungodliness, or else by thinking to be saved by any other name or

DISC. XXI.

DISC. XXI.

any other merit, or by any other way, than that of Chriſt who was crucified for us; "who was "to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and unto the "Greeks fooliſhneſs; but is to them that are "ſaved," as the Apoſtle St. Paul ſays in anothe. place, "Chriſt, the power of God and the wiſ- "dom of God."

The word of ſalvation ſpoken of in the text is the word of forgiveneſs and acceptance with God for Chriſt's ſake. And the other words of the text, in which it is ſaid, "Ye men of Iſrael, "children of the ſtock of Abraham, and who- "ſoever among you feareth God, to you is the "word of this ſalvation ſent;" theſe will be proper to teach us ſome things that very much require to be conſidered; viz.

That the fear of God is the neceſſary diſpo- ſition to receive the goſpel or the glad tidings of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt.

And

And farther, that of thoſe who fear God it is required beſides, that they ſhould believe or truſt in Chriſt. DISC. XXI.

Of the firſt it ſhould ſeem not neceſſary to ſay much, becauſe it is ſo plain, that without repentance and the fear of God no man can be ſaved. This is the plain and the whole preaching of the goſpel; "Repent and be baptized in the "name of Jeſus Chriſt, and ye ſhall obtain the re-"miſſion of ſins." John the Baptiſt, who came to prepare the way of Chriſt, prepared the way in this manner, preaching the baptiſm of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins. The baptiſm of repentance, or baptiſm as a ſign of repentance, and the forſaking of former ſins, John preached, but referred them for forgiveneſs to Chriſt who ſhould come after him; whoſe ſhoes, he ſaid, he was not worthy to unlooſe: who was the "lamb of God, he ſaid, which ſhould take "away the ſins of the world:" who, as a full proof of their acceptance with God, and as the

DISC. XXI.

means of renewing their nature and ſtrengthening them, "ſhall baptize them with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire." Which is ſaid, becauſe the Holy Ghoſt deſcended in thoſe days not only upon the Apoſtles, but upon many of the firſt Chriſtians in fire, viſible to the eyes: upon all of them with ſome ſenſible manifeſtation; to be a proof to us of forgiveneſs and ſalvation in the name of Chriſt. Chriſt came to declare forgiveneſs to ſinners, which made the Phariſees and the righteous men, as they thought themſelves, among the Jews, blaſpheme him, and ſpeak of him, in contempt, as the friend of publicans and ſinners. But what ſinners were they, whom he came to ſave, and to preach to them the glad tidings of ſalvation? Hear what our Saviour ſays himſelf: "The ſpirit of the Lord "is upon me:" the meek, gentle, and kind ſpirit of God: "becauſe he hath anointed me "to preach the goſpel; to preach glad tidings "to the poor. He hath ſent me to heal the "broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the "captives,

" captives, and recovery of ſight to the blind, DISC.
" and to ſet at liberty them that are bruiſed; to XXI.
" preach the acceptable year of the Lord:" *i. e.* that year which anſwers to, and which was prefigured by, the year of *Jubilee*; every fiftieth year among the Jews; in which all debtors were releaſed, and thoſe that were in ſlavery were redeemed. You ſee he came to heal them that are broken-hearted; to ſet at liberty them that are bruiſed; *i. e.* thoſe who firſt have conſcience of ſin, and who repent from the fear of God. He did not come to ſave or to forgive thoſe, who continue ſtill in ſin; who do not repent of what they have done; who do not dread for the future time to commit it. Who are they, whom he invites ſo kindly, ſo graciouſly, to come to him? All them that labour and are heavy laden; and to whom he will give reſt. To ſuch he ſays, I will aſſure you of peace and forgiveneſs at God's hands. I will not then afterwards give you liberty to ſin; but, ſaith he, " Take " my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I " am

DISC. XXI. "am meek;" and, though without ſin, "lowly "of heart; and ye ſhall find reſt unto your "ſouls." I will not give you liberty to ſin, but I will make your ſtrict and hard duty ſweet: my yoke ye ſhall find eaſy and my burden light. Who were they, whom he declared to be *bleſſed?* The poor in ſpirit: that is, the humble; they, who do not go on headſtrong and violent in their ſins. They, that mourn, becauſe they do not find themſelves able to fulfill the will of God. Who were the ſinners that he received? He refuſed no one that did truly repent: he would not have been a gracious Saviour if he had. He compares himſelf to a ſhepherd, that, having an hundred ſheep, of which one was gone aſtray, left the ninety and nine in the wilderneſs, and went after the one till he found it; and, when he found it, he laid it on his ſhoulders rejoicing, and even called his neighbours and friends, ſaying, "Rejoice with me, for I "have found the ſheep that was loſt. So like-"wiſe, ſays he, I ſay unto you, that joy ſhall

"be

" be in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, DISC. XXI.
" more than over ninety and nine juſt perſons,
" who need no repentance." This ſeems difficult and hard to be conceived: but, if we obſerve our Saviour's way of ſpeaking in other places, and the general doctrine of the ſcriptures, we ſhall ſee that by the *righteous* or *juſt* perſons, who need no repentance, he does not mean that they are *really* ſo as not to need it; (for all men are ſinners, and there is no ſuch difference before God as there is before men) but thoſe, who thought themſelves ſo juſt, and ſo holy, as to need no repentance: and, if ſo, it is ſtrictly true, that one ſinner, that *repents*, is more acceptable than ninety and nine ſuch juſt perſons; *i. e.* ſuch ſinners as think they need no repentance. He did not come to ſave ſuch, he ſays plainly; " for the whole need no phyſician, but
" they that are ſick; and I came not, ſays he,
" to call the righteous, but ſinners to repent-
" ance." This he ſpoke to the Phariſees, who thought themſelves holy, juſt, and good; and

DISC. XXI.

who excluded themſelves, by not coming to repentance, from the mercy and forgiveneſs of God. The ſinners whom he received with tenderneſs, and compaſſion, and mercy, were ſuch as that Mary, who had been ſinful: but though the Phariſees looked upon her with ſcorn, yet ſhe came among them and before them all to Chriſt, and "ſtood at his feet behind, weep-"ing, and began" (becauſe ſhe knew him to be a divine Saviour and not an human perſon or teacher only) "to waſh his feet with tears, and "wipe them with the hairs of her head, and "anointed his feet with the ointment." She was one that was moſt deeply ſorrowful for her ſins, and had an hope and faith to be forgiven for Chriſt's ſake; for which mercy and forgiveneſs ſhe loved Chriſt ſo much, and more than thoſe who did not acknowledge ſo much ſin to be forgiven. For ſo it is plain, from what our Saviour ſaid then of a certain creditor that had two debtors. The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and, becauſe they had not

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to pay, he frankly forgave them both: and, DISC. XXI.
"which of them," ſaith he to the Phariſee, "thinkeſt thou, will love him moſt? And, when he anſwered, Him to whom moſt had been forgiven, he applied this to this woman, and to the ſigns of love which ſhe ſhewed; and tells him that he might know that her ſins, which were many, were forgiven, by this ſign; "be-"cauſe ſhe loved much: but to whom little is "forgiven, the ſame loveth little." That is, you, who have no ſins, and need no forgiveneſs, cannot love your Saviour, and cannot come to him to be forgiven. It is plain that *repentance and the fear of God are necessary to obtain forgiveness of sins, and to make us partakers of the mercies of Christ:* which is what I was to ſhew: and this is the way to Chriſt, as is plainly ſignified in my text, and all through the ſcripture: we muſt every one prepare the way, as it was at firſt, in the preaching of the goſpel, by repentance, that we may receive forgiveneſs of ſins. And all the means of repent-

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DISC. XXI.

ance, that can be taught (for God's ſpirit bloweth where it liſteth) are to conſider what God requires of us; to love him with all our hearts, and with all our minds, and to love our neighbour as ourſelves; that the Chriſtian law is pure and ſpiritual, ſearching even to the heart and inmoſt thoughts, not requiring our outward actions only, but our inward will and ſpirit. With the conſideration of this law our hearts will teach us, that we are all ſinners before God. And, if our own hearts condemn us, we muſt know that God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things: and he is not a God that can allow of ſin, or that gives his laws in vain, and will not require the performance of them: and Chriſt hath ſaid "that heaven and earth "ſhall paſs away ſooner than one jot or one tit-"tle of the law of God ſhall paſs till all be "fulfilled." This, if we will examine ourſelves, will lead us to the knowledge of our ſins, to repentance and the fear of God; the fear of his puniſhment for our paſt ſins, and the deſire

not

not to offend any more. With this consideration of our own manifold sins, we shall seek our only remedy, and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, we shall trust in his death and his merits for us; "by "which we can be justified from all that we "could not be justified by the law of Moses." We shall then be at peace with God; we shall love him and serve him, not to make atonement for our sins, not as debtors to make our own satisfaction, which we are not able to do, but freely, as we are forgiven for Christ's sake: we shall, with love and gratitude for the great mercies vouchsafed unto us, with God's grace, as far as we are able, endeavour to do all that is required of us, even our whole duty to God and man. DISC. XXI.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXII.

THE DUTIES AND REWARDS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PSALM XV. 1. 2.

Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? Even he, that leadeth an uncorrupt life and doeth the thing which is right.

DISC. XXII.

THESE words ſhew us what thoſe things are in men which God approves; ſo that they, who have them, ſhall be admitted "to dwell in "his tabernacle, and to reſt upon his holy hill;" or thoſe, who have them not, or who are contrary in their diſpoſitions and actions, ſhall not be

be admitted to dwell with him. Who is he that ſhall be thought worthy to dwell with God; or "to reſt upon his holy hill? He that leadeth "an uncorrupt life." The beſt and true meaning of which ſeems to be, he that is plain, or well-meaning in all his words and actions; he, that has an honeſt and good heart, or that has no ſiniſter deſigns of advantage to himſelf; no deſigns of malice or injury to others, to turn him out of his plain road, which is "to do that "which is right," ſo as to pleaſe and to be approved of God: "He doeth that which is right;" *i. e.* (chiefly) in regard to *men* he does what is right, "and ſpeaketh the truth from his "heart." The Pſalmiſt goes on to deſcribe him thus: "He hath uſed no deceit in his tongue, "nor done evil to his neighbour, and hath not "ſlandered his neighbour. He ſetteth not by "himſelf, but is lowly in his own eyes." There is another ſenſe of this, which in the Bible tranſlation is, "In whoſe eyes a vile or bad man" (though he be rich or great) "is diſregarded; "and

DISC. XXII.

DISC. XXIII. "and he maketh much of them that fear the "Lord! He that ſweareth (or promiſeth) to "his neighbour, and diſappointeth him not, "though it were to his own hindrance. He, "that hath not given his money upon uſury," (not uſed any unjuſt means of increaſing his wealth) "nor taken reward againſt the innocent: "Whoſo doeth theſe things" (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) "ſhall never fall." And ſuch perſons are they, in anſwer to the queſtion in the beginning, "Who ſhall dwell in God's tabernacle, and "reſt upon his holy hill?" Now, what we are to underſtand from this is firſt of all, that uprightneſs, or to have a good meaning always towards men, to do what is right, to do no injury by deceit or by ſlander; ſimply to do whatever is right; not to regard the rich or great, if they are bad or vile perſons, not to regard them becauſe of their riches or greatneſs; but to make much of, to value and to ſhew favour to, them who fear the Lord; to be punctual and juſt to all our engagements; to uſe no unjuſt means of

getting

getting wealth;—these are things that are acceptable to God: we must not think that we can please him without these; we must not think particularly, that any appearance or act of religion, of worship, of prayer, or of sacrifice, without this inward and real uprightness, can ever please God. But we must not think, that we can have such uprightness towards men without religion; (for God's grace and power must be effectual in our hearts to give us such an uprightness; and to have this uprightness in all our dealings with men, to love truth with them, must be the means to make us sincere with God, and to bring us to a sense of all that is right in regard to him) we must never think that there is a justice and a duty to men and none to God. Our duty to God is the beginning of all, and highest of all duties; as indeed is plain, if we consider it: to love him and to honour him is the highest, and indeed the plainest, of all duties: this we must, therefore, take care to think; and not let any opinion of ourselves, or DISC. XXIII.

of

Disc. XXII. of our behaviour in regard to men, bring us to excuse ourselves from our duty to God; yet, on the other side, we must be careful that no opinions that we have in matters of religion, no performance of our duty that we have been able to do in respect of religion; we must take care that even this may not lead us to think that any such service will ever be accepted by God, when sincerity, plainness, and always to mean well towards men, not to do or to design any ill; when this uprightness and this good meaning is wanting, that ever we can please God, or be accepted, or suffered to be with him. For this, it is plain, ought to be the effect of religion; to make us as perfect as possible; and first of all uncorrupted in all our dealings in this world. And this is of great consequence to every one, how he shall preserve or gain that mind or disposition which God will approve.

But there are great corruptions in the world by lust, by the desire of worldly things, which it will

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be difficult for us to escape; but which ought to be by the effect and power of religion: therefore I shall endeavour to shew at this time, as far as may be sufficient, or may be of some use to us, what are those great considerations which religion gives; by the force of which we may escape the pollutions of the world, or be able to preserve and to gain an uncorruptness of mind and integrity in all our concerns in this world. For it is necessary we should escape from the corruptions of this world; either that we should be prevented from falling into them, or be able to recover ourselves out of them, if we hope for the satisfaction and approbation of our minds, or would have an assured hope of God's mercy and favour, through his son Jesus Christ hereafter. For "he, who shall dwell with him, or "rest upon his holy hill, is he, who leadeth an "uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing that is "right;" who, on every occasion, in which our neighbour is concerned, or hath a right to know, "speaketh the truth from his heart," or as he

DISC. XXII.

DISC. XXII. really thinks; "who, therefore, hath uſed no "deceit in his tongue, nor ſlandered his neigh- "bour:" who hath not, out of an awe for wealth or greatneſs, flattered or ſerved unworthy perſons; but is true to God's cauſe; and, though he ſhews due regard to all men, (according to their ſeveral ſtations in this world) yet "maketh much of them (only) who fear "the Lord."

What are the conſiderations I ſay, which chiefly muſt be drawn from religion, or from our own ſatisfaction, or even from our own worldly intereſt in ſome degree; what are the conſiderations that religion affords (which muſt be the greateſt) to preſerve us from all corruption, and keep up in our minds ſuch a good intention always, as, if it is not plain to men, yet God will ſee it always to be as it is, and will approve and reward?

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1ſt. The firſt great conſideration then which religion gives, and which muſt needs have great force, if we will allow it, to preſerve us from all corruption, is the conſideration and a ſenſe of that happy ſtate of dwelling with God, and of reſting with him, which the words in my text lead us to, when they tell us that we "ſhall "dwell in his tabernacle, or ſhall reſt upon "his holy hill." Now this is that great hope, which is ſet before us ſo plainly in ſcripture, as what ought to be in our thoughts, more than any happineſs, or than any advantages of this world; that there is another world, an heavenly ſtate and condition, a "kingdom of heaven," in which we ſhall live with God, in his more immediate and glorious preſence, as he will manifeſt himſelf to us. For God himſelf will be the chief object, the light and glory, of that other world; ſo that we ſhall live with him, in in that "preſence, in which is the fulneſs of "joy, and at his right hand, where there are "pleaſures for ever-more, and God himſelf will DISC. XXII.

DISC. XXII. for ever be our delight and joy. And, that we may be able to conceive this, we are told, that we ſhall be with him who ſaved and redeemed us, and who appeared, firſt of all, in human fleſh, and in our nature; with whom we ſhall be and he will be with us, in that ſame nature and human perſon which he had in this world, when he *tabernacled* among men; though that will be in him, without doubt, freed from all imperfections of human nature; his human nature will be covered with glory. Now this is what we may be able to conceive ſo far, that we muſt think it will be an object to us of joy and delight to ſee him and to live with him. For he is a *divine* perſon, the Son of God, that has all the power of God, to make our hearts joyful, "to give us pleaſures as out of a river." And this is another comfort: we need not fear that his preſence will be too divine, too exalted for us to bear. For he can raiſe us to what perfection he pleaſes. It is expreſsly ſaid, that we ſhall be changed, ſo as to be like him in our bodies.

bodies. They will be ſtrengthened, ſo that we ſhall be able to bear his preſence and to rejoice in it. He will raiſe us up to him, or he, who came down from heaven to earth, to viſit us, to ſhew himſelf to us as a real man, he, in heaven and in his glory, will know how to temper and to accommodate himſelf to us. He is infinite in goodneſs and loving kindneſs to men; as we have reaſon to know from what he did on earth. Hereafter, in heaven, it will be the time that he will open all his goodneſs; for it is his deſign to make us happy. I ſpeak of theſe things briefly. But beſides this, we ſhall be united to, and joined in company with, all the beſt perſons, that have ever been on this earth; "to the ſpi-"rits of juſt and good men made perfect;" made perfect for their own happineſs, and made perfect in goodneſs. Only let us conceive, that the perfection and goodneſs, of which the goſpel ſpeaks, is not ſuch, which we ſhall admire or delight in ourſelves. For our perfection in heaven will be to love God, to worſhip him, to

DISC. XXII.

DISC. XXII.

ſing his praiſes, to fall down before him, to have our pleaſure and our joy only in worſhipping him, in acknowledging his goodneſs and not our own. So it will be that there will be no room for pride, or for envy, if others are higher than we are in God's favour, or nearer to his preſence, or whatever diſtinctions there may be in that future ſtate: for it will not be, as in this world, where we envy thoſe that are above us, and deſpiſe ſuch perſons as we think beneath us. In that world, he is greateſt, who is beſt. He will be happieſt, who can moſt of all prefer others to himſelf. We ſhall not be fit for that company, till we can rejoice that others are ſuperior to us, or that every one has that place, that degree of favour and of happineſs, that God ſhall think proper for every one. What joy, what ſtate of happineſs, will this be? All tears and all ſorrows, all pain, or ſickneſs and infirmity will be no more for ever. There will be no death; we ſhall riſe to another ſtate, where there will be no pain, no ſickneſs. Are not theſe things

worthy

worthy of our thoughts? Are they not ſuffi- DISC. XXII.
cient to wean us from all affections to this world; from all inordinate deſire, or anxious care and concern for worldly things? What is there that can tempt us to be unjuſt or falſe, to be wicked, or to do injury to any one, if we keep ſuch a ſtate as this in our minds; if we remember that it is to this happineſs itſelf we are called by being Chriſtians? We were in our baptiſm itſelf made children of God; declared to be in his favour, to be heirs of everlaſting life. Shall we, for a morſel of bread, or for any the greateſt thing in this world, ſell our hope of another life, ſuch as it is deſcribed to us? Can any thing in this world be an equivalent or bear to be compared with the happineſs of heaven? The reaſon that we are tempted, ſo as to be overpowered by any worldly temptation, any proſpect of advantage, of any advantage; the reaſon muſt be, that we have not worthy thoughts or conceptions of that happineſs which is to come; which is ſet plainly before us in ſcripture, and

DISC. XXII.

is proved to us by every thing that we read and see there; by all that our Saviour said, by his preaching, and by every miracle that he wrought on earth: for every miracle was intended to shew his power to raise us again to another state, above what is natural, and above this world. It was proved by his resurrection from the dead, and by his ascension into heaven; and by the Apostles healing the sick and the lame, giving sight to the blind, and raising even dead persons to life again in his name.

If we read these great things, with due consideration, in the Holy Scriptures, where they are so very plainly related, and set before us, we cannot but be affected in our hearts and minds. Let us then, henceforth, give up all our affections to him who so loved us, as to come into the world, and to live and die for our sakes. Let us in all things be just and devout, "walking in "all the commandments and ordinances of the "Lord blameless." So shall we, by the guidance

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of the Holy Spirit, live in the practice of true religion here; and, through the atonement and interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord and Saviour, be admitted "to dwell in the tabernacle "of the Lord, and to reſt upon his holy hill" for ever and ever hereafter. DISC. XXII.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXIII.

THE HOLY COMMUNION A MEMORIAL OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

1. COR. XI. 23.

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

DISC. XXIII.

WHEN we consider this, and the whole account which is given in this place, and in the gospels, we shall see plainly, from the time in which this was done, (the night in which our Saviour was betrayed) and from his appointing

pointing the memorials to be of his body broken and of his blood ſhed; that, though the words, to *remember him*, are general, yet, perhaps, it is chiefly required we ſhould remember his death and ſufferings. And this is made more certain, by the explanation, which the Apoſtle gives, immediately after: "For, as oft as ye eat this "bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the "Lord's death till he come." There can be no doubt but this is the proper meaning of this ſacrament. DISC. XXIII.

What I ſhall endeavour to ſhew at this time is, the reaſons why our Saviour ſhould require or teach us to think ſo much of his death, as it is plain he did, by appointing a memorial of this in particular; and ſo far, that it is rightly ſaid, in our offices, that, what he commanded us in that appointment, was "to continue a perpe-"tual memory of his death until his coming "again." And I ſhall conſider it in this manner, if his deſign and deſire was that himſelf ſhould

DISC. XXIII.

ſhould be remembered, why he did not mention the acts of power, and miracles, which they had ſeen him do, or the continual acts of goodneſs, condeſcenſion and kindneſs, which he had ſhewn, while he lived and converſed with them? For it cannot be ſuppoſed that any of theſe things were to be forgotten. And, if his deſign was, that his commands, his pure and perfect rules and precepts, ſhould be remembered, why did not he ſay, Remember all my precepts and commands, which we know he intended ſhould be remembered; but ſaid, by the manner and time of his appointment, only this, Remember that I *died* for you?

1ſt. Now for the firſt conſideration, as far as he intended and required to be *himſelf* remembered, there is this, which appears plainly from this appointment, and from his whole life; that he did not chooſe to be admired for any acts of power or greatneſs, or even for goodneſs itſelf in general; but to be loved and honoured, with a deeper

a deeper and ſtronger affection, for the moſt real benefits obtained, without any other power in himſelf but that of dying and ſuffering. It is plain firſt of all, that his divine nature was laid aſide, as much as poſſible, when he diveſted himſelf of his glory and the form of God, in which he had always appeared, and took upon himſelf the form of a ſervant, and was made, and choſe to come into the world, in the likeneſs of man, and of an humble and poor perſon, without any of the advantages of human nature. *The ſon of man*, we ſee plainly, was the title which he choſe; for it was moſt agreeable to his deſign, by ſuffering and by humbling himſelf in the greateſt degree, to do us the greateſt good. It appears, that it was not with any willingneſs, or any pleaſure in the things themſelves, that, he worked his miracles. He did them, becauſe it was neceſſary; as he ſays himſelf, if men did not ſee ſigns and acts of extraordinary power, they would not believe. The miracles, which he did, were not ſuch as would moſt

DISC. XXIII.

DISC. XXIII.

moſt raiſe wonder and aſtoniſhment; not ſuch ſigns from heaven, as the Jews demanded of him, but the healing the ſick, the lame, the blind, the humbleſt as well as the beſt which could be choſen. In performing theſe, his deſign was to gain conviction and belief, but admiration as little as poſſible: for which reaſon he performs them, though publicly, yet with the leaſt oſtentation that was poſſible: as, when the woman came after him, and touched his garment and was made whole, he did not intend the miracle ſhould be loſt; becauſe his miracles were for a real and neceſſary purpoſe; he, therefore, aſked who it was; and, when by this ſhe was brought out, and owned publicly ſhe was healed, he then ſaid, "Go in peace; thy faith "hath made the whole." Which was a form that he uſed, not only to require a belief and dependence upon him, as a means of farther ſalvation; but it was a manner of ſpeaking to leſſen admiration; that, if any could think that faith or perſuaſion could have any effect in ſuch miracles

miracles as he did, they might think for the pre- DISC. XXIII.
ſent it had ſome part. Nothing appears more plainly than this, that his miracles are performed with the leaſt ſhew that was poſſible; for it was not his deſign to gain admiration to himſelf; for this is leaſt of all to gain the heart, and would of itſelf have no real deep effect: and for the ſame reaſon, (though this is a different thing) yet it was not ſufficient to ſhew to men the faireſt and moſt perfect example of all holineſs, virtue, goodneſs, with a continual condeſcenſion and kindneſs in all his behaviour, diſcourſe, and actions. It was not enough for him to be admired, or to be loved beſides for holineſs, virtue, and perfection in general; neither is it enough for us to love and to admire virtue and goodneſs as a picture, or as an object, without having ſome farther and deeper concern with him, and other and ſtronger reaſons for performing every thing that is right and good, than merely the conviction that it is right in itſelf. He deſigned to add another and a ſtronger reaſon for doing every thing

DISC. XXIII.

thing that he ſhould deſire, which is obligation to him, the deepeſt and ſtrongeſt obligation that can be conceived. For theſe reaſons, in reſpect of himſelf, he laid aſide his glory, and choſe by the greateſt ſufferings, with the moſt perfect humiliation, to do us the greateſt good. He went on with a view to this through his whole life. He was not ſatisfied with any thing elſe, but ſpeaks as plainly, as there was room to ſpeak, of it, of his death, that he was to accompliſh, as the great and principal thing. Of this he ſaid, that, "when he ſhould be lifted "up from the earth, he would draw all men to "him;" *i. e.* ſome of all; for he was ſpeaking to one who aſked him to ſhew himſelf to ſtrangers, to ſome Greeks or Gentiles, that wanted to ſee him. And we ſhould think that by this expreſſion he meant exaltation or aſcenſion into heaven; as it is certain, that, after that it was that the goſpel was preached and had it's great effect. But the Evangeliſt explains this, that he ſaid it, "ſignifying by what death he ſhould "die;"

"die;" that ſuffering in that manner, and being ſhewn to men in that form, as it was the moſt remarkable way in which any one could ſuffer, he would then draw men to him by the ſtrongeſt obligations of his ſuffering for them. Now, how great this obligation to him is, or what it is that we owe to his death, and to his ſufferings for us, for our benefit, as it is ſaid continually in the ſcripture, that is what is not neceſſary to be ſaid at preſent. But what I was to ſhew was, that why he ſhould chooſe for himſelf to be remembered chiefly and particularly as dying for us; the reaſon is, that he choſe to be loved and honoured by us, for the greateſt benefit; not to be admired for acts of greatneſs or power, nor for his perfect holineſs and goodneſs conſidered in itſelf, without our having a real concern and intereſt in it. DISC. XXIII.

And now the other thing to be conſidered is, why he did not at this time repeat to them all his former commands and precepts, or why he

DISC. XXIII.

did not desire to be remembered as their master and teacher, but as suffering and dying for them. For which the reasons were plainly, that he thought this remembrance of him the most effectual to restrain men from sin, and to induce them to all acts of righteousness and goodness, to which his great design was by all means to lead us. And we may see that this of all others is the best and most effectual.

It is to be remembered, as what appears plainly in scripture, that his death and sufferings were, in the strictest or most proper sense, ordered to be in our stead; that we could not by any other means be forgiven, or have all our sins and unworthiness forgotten. Why this sacrifice and atonement to God should be required, we cannot perfectly judge and perceive, though we may sufficiently. For we know that justice in God, or a dislike and abhorrence of all ill must be infinite, or in the highest degree, as well as goodness, kindness, or mercy. Now, what will be

be the effect of this, or what ſatisfaction it may be neceſſary ſhould be made, that ſins may be forgiven, who can poſſibly declare or judge? We cannot judge for ourſelves, as we are the perſons concerned, and we muſt ſubmit ourſelves to what the thing itſelf teaches was neceſſary or was required; that a divine perſon of higheſt excellence and goodneſs ſhould ſuffer and die for us. Now, nothing in the world can be imagined to teach us more plainly, how great the guilt and danger of ſin is, than to conſider that it was neceſſary that ſo divine and excellent a perſon ſhould ſuffer for it. DISC. XXIII.

We ſee from this, how true it is, that our Saviour came to bring glory to God; to make his laws, and his commands, and his name to be honoured and revered the more by the ſufferings which he bore for the violation of them. Beſides that deep and ſtrongeſt obligation, which we have to him, is to be remembered; and we know, that what he intended by every thing that

DISC. XXIII.

he did or ſuffered, was to bring us to righteouſneſs and goodneſs, and we can ſhew our gratitude and our obedience to him in no other manner, than by doing whatever he has commanded. Now in this reſpect it is plain, that the death of Chriſt upon our account is fitted naturally and of itſelf to have the greateſt and beſt effects. Death itſelf, with the greateſt ſufferings and afflictions, muſt needs be of all things the moſt affecting. But the death of the moſt excellent perſon, and of the trueſt friend, is ſtill more affecting, and we cannot, while we have this before us, encourage any vain or ſinful thought. The death of him, therefore, who was ſo valuable in himſelf, and who died for us, muſt needs be, of all things that ever were in the world, the moſt affecting and the moſt ſerious; the moſt mortifying to all high, or vain, or ſinful thoughts. If we had ſeen him, and been preſent at his death, or if we were as thoſe, of whom it is ſaid, that Chriſt was evidently crucified before them; or if we could keep

this

this great thing ſteadily in our thoughts, it would not then be poſſible, that we ſhould wilfully allow ourſelves in any thing contrary to the rules and pattern which he has ſet before us. All vanity, all worldly deſires, and ſins, would die away in his preſence. St. Paul, therefore, had reaſon, when he laid ſo much ſtreſs upon this, and choſe to preach Chriſt crucified only, or with a peculiar ſtreſs; for all other motives and arguments are uſed in the goſpel; but this is uſed in a particular manner. For it is expected, that, as his death was upon our account, we ſhould partake with him. But how was this to be? It was not always that we ſhould die, as he did, in the natural or literal ſenſe. This could not be always neceſſary or required; and the ſcripture has explained it otherwiſe. And where it requires, that we ſhould underſtand by our baptiſm itſelf that we profeſs ourſelves to be partakers with him, his meaning is that, becauſe he died, we ſhould die to the world and DISC. XXIII.

DISC. XXIII.

its affections, and be in this ſenſe *crucified* with him, as St. Paul ſays. It is plain that he makes this the doctrine of the goſpel; and this, therefore, *was the proper thing to have a memorial appointed for it.* And by this we ſee, that to come to this, muſt needs be, as it is always thought, the moſt ſerious act of religion: that it is not lightly to be performed; and that, though no ſins can hinder us from mercy, if ſincerely repented of, and forſaken, yet we cannot come to it, without real purpoſes of amendment, and a juſt thought of that divine perſon, who died, to raiſe us from ſin, and to bring us to all virtue and goodneſs of living.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXIV.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEGUN IN THIS WORLD.

LUKE XVII. 20, 21.

When he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come; he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

THIS is one text by which we may perceive that *the kingdom of God*, ſo often ſpoken of in the New Teſtament, and which our Bleſſed Saviour and all his Apoſtles preached as the glad

DISC. XXIV.

tidings of the goſpel, *hath its beginning in this world*, though it will not be accompliſhed, or made perfect in glory or happineſs, but in the world to come. The Phariſees and other Jews thought it would be a worldly kingdom, that would come with outward ſhew and the greatneſs of this world; as if Chriſt was to give men greatneſs, power, and a kingdom of this world. Therefore, our bleſſed Saviour, knowing with what thoughts they aſked him, ſaid, The kingdom of God is not ſuch as you imagine it to be: it cometh not with obſervation or great earthly ſhew. For behold, the kingdom of God is within you or among you, though you do not perceive or acknowledge it. By this it is plain, that the kingdom of God hath it's beginning in this world, that it was then come, or ſhould come ſoon; though not with ſuch pomp and ſhew as the Jews expected. It is plain likewiſe from what our Saviour ſays on another occaſion, that the kingdom of God ſhould be taken from the Jews and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. For this

this was fulfilled, when Chriſtians were called to be the people of God inſtead of the Jews. And the kingdom of God, our Saviour ſays, elſewhere, is like a field where the good and bad ſeed, the tares and the wheat, grow together until the harveſt, at the end of the world; when Chriſt ſhall ſend his angels and gather out of his kingdom all things which offend, and them which do iniquity. By this it appears, that his kingdom is in this world, though not perfected, nor free from offences and wicked men; which will not be till hereafter. DISC. XXIV.

It is, therefore, plainly the goſpel itſelf, or the people that are called to it, and believe in it, it is thoſe are called in ſcripture now the people or the kingdom of God. And, this our Saviour hath ſaid is not a kingdom of this world, though it is in the world. It is not a kingdom that promiſes worldly bleſſings, riches, or power to the members of it. God had a kingdom, *i. e.* a peculiar kingdom in the world before, among the Jews, with whom he was preſent in a particular manner,

DISC. XXIV.

manner, and who were his people above all the people of the world. But his protection to them as a people and a kingdom upon earth consisted in temporal things. But the kingdom of God or of heaven, that Christ preached, was to be spiritual, and to consist in spiritual blessings, and such as are not of this world. This is the reason of what our Saviour says to Nicodemus; "Unless a man be born again, he cannot enter "into the kingdom of God." The Jews were the Israel after the flesh, they were the carnal and the outward people of God; to whom he gave an earthly Canaan, the pledge of an heavenly one, which will be hereafter. He likewise defended them from their enemies, and from all evil, whilst they were faithful to him in this world. To be a subject of this kingdom required no more than to obey the outward law of God, to be descended of Abraham and to be circumcised. But to enter into the kingdom which Christ preached more was required; viz. to be born again. For it is not only said of the kingdom

that

that will be hereafter, that "flesh and blood can- DISC. XXIV.
"not enter into it;" but that every one, that is in Christ and in his kingdom, is even now "a "new creature. Old things are passed away, "and all things are become new." The subjects of his kingdom do not live nor walk after the flesh: they are those, whom he died to deliver from this present world: they are those, who are purified and sanctified by the faith that is in him, to live "unto him who loved them, "and gave himself for them:" they live no more by worldly motives, or with worldly views, but serve the Lord Christ: they are delivered "from the power of darkness, and of this world, "and translated into the kingdom of God's dear "Son." So that now they have communion and fellowship with the saints above, are united to that blessed family of God in heaven and in earth. They have them as friends. They are not alone or destitute in this world; for it is not called the kingdom of God without reason. It would not be called so, if those, who serve God, were left

destitute

DISC. XXIV.

deſtitute and without God in this preſent world. It is called ſo, becauſe there was a kingdom of God in the world before, to which he was preſent and vouchſafed peculiar bleſſings, though temporal ones.

To be a true Chriſtian, therefore, is to be already a child and a partaker of the kingdom of God; of that kingdom of God, which is in the world at preſent; and, therefore, we may hope for bleſſings, and favour, and protection from Almighty God in this preſent life. But let us not be deceived; let us know what the bleſſings are, which we have reaſon and ground to expect. I ſaid they are not the ſame bleſſings as were promiſed and vouchſafed to the Jews, who were before the children of the kingdom, and the people of God. They expected from God and received temporal deliverances, or the contrary, according as they lived. But it is not ſo in the goſpel. There are no promiſes made of greater worldly proſperity to Chriſtians than to other men;

men; becauſe "Chriſt's kingdom is not of this "world." But bleſſings there muſt be, where Chriſt is king. Though we ſhould have ſufferings or afflictions, yet God can make his peace abound much more, and can give the trueſt comfort in the midſt of ſorrows and afflictions. DISC. XXIV.

The firſt bleſſing is "to be delivered from "this preſent evil world." If we would know what bleſſing that is, let us conſider what miſery it is to be ſubject to this world, to the fear or dread of it; to the deſire of worldly things, to the luſt after and purſuit of worldly pleaſures. Theſe Chriſt and the power of his kingdom will deliver us from; for theſe often bring afflictions and ſorrows to the children of this world. "Af-"fliction and darkneſs is in their ways, and the "way of peace have they not known." The Chriſtian is not indeed promiſed that all things ſhall be proſperous to him, or that he ſhall be free from pains and ſufferings: becauſe this world is a ſtate of trial and probation, and afflictions

DISC. XXIV.

flictions are the fire by which we are tried and our droſs is burnt away. Sufferings of ſome ſort we muſt expect, until we are made perfect in another world. But another and better thing the good Chriſtian may aſſure himſelf of; viz. that he ſhall be at peace with God, and know that he is in God's favour and love for Chriſt's ſake, and ſhall have the joyful hopes of heaven hereafter. This peace was peculiarly preached and declared in the goſpel. This was what the angels ſung:—"Peace on earth; good will," (*i. e.* the good will and favour of God) "to-"wards men." This peace our Saviour ſent his diſciples into every town and city to declare. The goſpel is called "the word that began "from Galilee, preaching peace through Jeſus "Chriſt, who is Lord of all." This peace of God and hope of an hereafter is very different from the ſecurity and careleſſneſs of wicked men. This laſt ariſes from *hardness of heart and contempt of God's word and commandments.* The other begins with fear, the acknowledgement of God's

God's juſtice, and the danger of all known ſins. Thoſe whom Chriſt invites are thoſe "who la- "bour and are heavy laden;" and theſe he will refreſh with his own ſpirit of love; and farther, with the love and friendſhip of all thoſe, who love God and Chriſt. For ſweet and kind and gentle is the ſpirit of Chriſt, wherever it is: if it be in ourſelves, it is our joy and our ſupport; if we meet with it in others, it will make our conſolation more abound; for true Chriſtians will love one another: as they will love all men, they will love thoſe moſt, who love God; and in ſuch fellowſhip and communion will be the greateſt earthly happineſs. DISC. XXIV.

Moreover the ſincere Chriſtian is happy in himſelf: in his own mind and temper; in his own buſineſs and his own affairs: for God is with him, and he has well-grounded hopes of eternal happineſs. He has contentment in this world: he deſires no more than the neceſſaries of this life, his happineſs is in the next.

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DISC. XXIV.

The ſum of all then that hath been ſaid is this, that a *Chriſtian life is the true happiness of every man:* which is a thing that may be made out by other arguments; as from the miſery, the inconvenience and ſhame of all ſinful ways, and from the nature of all goodneſs itſelf; which is fitted to make us contented, and eaſy, and happy in ourſelves. This is a thing that may be ſhewn in ſeveral inſtances. It is indeed what every one's own experience, or his obſervation of others, may ſhew him in a great meaſure. For even by common obſervation we can ſee that ſin and wickedneſs lead to miſery and ſhame and torment even in this world. And thoſe, that are truly good; we do not think to be more unhappy than others in this world. What I have now done is to ſhew that this thing appears ſtill ſtronger from arguments of the goſpel, and from the peculiar ſtate and privileges of Chriſtians. We are, as Chriſtians, called to be "members "of Chriſt, children of God, and inheritors of "the kingdom of heaven." Theſe bleſſings and

privileges

privileges are such, that it is said we are now in the kingdom of God; *i. e.* in God's covenant and favour: so that it is the nature of the gospel to afford greater hope and greater joy than men can naturally have, or by any other means, than hearing and reading God's holy word, believing in Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and living to him as our Lord and King, whose we are and whom we are obliged, from duty, gratitude, and love, to serve. DISC. XXIV.

DISCOURSE XXV.

THE SIN OF THE CHURCH OF ROME IN SHUTTING UP THE SCRIPTURES.

PSALM CVII. 1, 2.

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is gracious and his mercy endureth for ever. Let them give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed and delivered from the hand of the enemy.

DISC. XXV.

THIS Pſalm is written in commemoration and praiſe of thoſe wonderful deliverances, which the people of God experienced in former times, and is written in ſuch a manner, as may well diſpoſe us to be thankful to God for his deliverances to us. For our deliverances have been, perhaps,

perhaps, as great, though not the ſame. It is ſaid that "God gathered them from the eaſt, "and from the weſt, from the north, and from "the ſouth; that they went aſtray in the wil- "derneſs, out of the way, and found no city "to dwell in; that, being hungry and thirſty, "their ſoul fainted in them; that they cried "unto the Lord in their trouble, and he de- "livered them out of their diſtreſſes. For he "ſatisfieth the empty ſoul, and filleth the hun- "gry ſoul with goodneſs; ſuch as ſit in dark- "neſs and in the ſhadow of death, being faſt "bound in miſery and iron. He brought them "out of darkneſs and out of the ſhadow of "death, and brake their bonds in ſunder. He "turneth the floods into a wilderneſs, and he "drieth up the water-ſprings. A fruitful land "maketh he barren for the wickedneſs of them "that dwell therein: again, he maketh the wil- "derneſs a ſtanding water, and water-ſprings "of a dry ground: and there he ſetteth the "hungry, that they may build them a city to

DISC. XXV.

DISC. XXV.

"dwell in; that they may ſow their ſeed and "plant vineyards, to yield them fruits of in- "creaſe. He bleſſeth them ſo that they multi- "ply exceedingly, and ſuffereth not their cattle "to decreaſe. Again, when they are mi- "niſhed and brought low through oppreſſion, "through any plague or trouble; though he ſuf- "fer them to be evil intreated through tyrants, "and let them wander out of the way in the "wilderneſs, yet helpeth he the poor out of "miſery, and maketh him houſeholds like a "flock of ſheep. The righteous will conſider "this and rejoice; and the mouth of all wick- "edneſs ſhall be ſtopped. Whoſo is wiſe will "ponder theſe things, and they ſhall underſtand "the loving kindneſs of the Lord."

This day* is ſet apart for a commemoration of, and thankſgiving for, our deliverance from the ſlavery and miſery of popery. We may well thank God that we ſcarcely know how miſerable

* The Fifth of November.

ſerable a ſlavery and oppreſſion it is. Under this our country had groaned for many ages before the *Reformation*; before the true liberty and light of the goſpel was reſtored. It was intended to be brought upon us again by that horrid conſpiracy, which was to have had it's operation, as on this day, in the reign of one of our kings, as has been pointed out in the office for the day. This was ſuch a deſign, ſo horrid and cruel as, perhaps, was never known before; and, as we learn from hiſtory, was near being accompliſhed: but God defeated this counſel, and delivered us; when elſe the whole nation might have been enſlaved, upon the confuſion that muſt have followed, if ſo ſhocking a deſign had taken effect. And ſince that, not a century ago, the ſame thing, the introduction of popery, was intended again; and ſuch meaſures were taken, by the advice of wicked perſons, as were calculated to bring it on by large ſteps, if we had not, by God's gracious goodneſs, been again delivered by a proteſtant prince coming

DISC. XXV.

DISC. XXV.

over to us; which, by God's providence and bleſſing, defeated all their deſigns. Well, therefore, may "we have reaſon to give thanks, whom "the Lord hath twice ſo redeemed, and de-"livered from the hand of the enemy."

But that we may know how great this deliverance was, and be truly thankful to God for it, let us conſider a little in what the great oppreſſion and miſery of popery conſiſts.

Now, firſt of all, popery naturally brings on ſlavery and oppreſſion and miſery in worldly things.

This, perhaps, we may not be able to judge of eaſily, ſince we do not ourſelves ſee what popery would produce; but it is very plain from what is certainly known of the condition of other countries, where popery reigns, and which are poor, and oppreſſed and miſerable, by means of it. Poverty and miſery will, indeed, always be in the

the condition of this world: but poverty and misery in our nation are not so great as they are in other countries that have more natural advantages than even we have. The countries, I am speaking of, have naturally more fruitful soils and kinder seasons than we have, and yet we do not see amongst ourselves the very great poverty and misery which prevail in those countries, where popery reigns. The reason of it is because popery tends to slavery, and gives to some, by means of superstition, a power without bounds to enjoy all the labours of the poor; so that it occasions the greatest slavery and oppression in respect of worldly things: which is one reason, why we should dread and avoid it, and be thankful to God for delivering us from it. DISC. XXV.

Yet still the greatest hardship and oppression of popery is in another thing, in respect of religion itself, and our greatest comfort and hope of obtaining a better life: for, if it related only to this world, it would be tolerable: but this

DISC. XXV.

latter oppreſſion is the moſt cruel of all and the greateſt injury that can be done to man. But how is this? Let us conſider it ſeriouſly, that we may "have a reaſon to give to thoſe who "aſk us" why we think ourſelves happy for belonging to a better church, and that we may give God thanks for it.

Now, the great injury that popery does to the ſouls of men is not only by its particular doctrines; (though theſe are bad enough and contrary to the holy ſcriptures, to the word of God: I mean ſuch doctrines as tranſubſtantiation, the worſhipping of ſaints and images, which cannot profit; indulgences to ſin, which muſt deceive and lead men into deſtruction and perdition) but the greateſt injury, which it does, is in order to continue all theſe errors, and to guard them from being ſeen and diſcovered: I mean *the ſhutting up the holy ſcriptures, and forbidding the people to look into them.* They muſt not read the word of God themſelves, but only receive

ceive it from their prieſts; whereas we teach that it is the greateſt comfort and happineſs, as well as the right, of every chriſtian to read it himſelf. What the effects of this muſt be we may eaſily judge. It muſt neceſſarily put the greateſt ſtop to religion: for what can keep religion alive, but the reading the ſcriptures upon which it depends? If it be ſaid that it is as well to hear them only, this is certainly very neceſſary and uſeful; but it muſt be much better to hear and to read them too: it is far better to have them continually, when our worldly buſineſs will permit, in our minds and in our hands alſo. It is then only they will have an effect upon us. When they are heard only at ſtated times, and forgotten all the week afterwards, what good effect can they have upon us? DISC. XXV.

This would be ſo, if the prieſts were to preach true doctrine. But what ſhall the people do, if they do not, when at the ſame time they are forbidden to read and to conſider it themſelves?

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DISC. XXV.

And how can it be otherwiſe, but that falſe doctrines will ariſe, when the ſcripture is ſhut up, which only can teach us the truth? It was by this only, that the errors of the Romiſh church could prevail and be maintained: becauſe, if the ſcriptures were open, and to be read by every one, thoſe errors would be ſeen. But they are the "blind guides themſelves that lead the "blind." But however this be, the other conſideration is enough to ſhew us the injury to religion and to the ſouls of men, which is done by popery: becauſe it muſt deprive a Chriſtian of the greateſt comfort and benefit, if he is not permitted and encouraged to delight himſelf in the word of God. It will ſoon put an end to all religion, and men will turn their thoughts to any thing elſe; one to his farm, another to his merchandize; becauſe he is not allowed to look into that book, where his greateſt treaſure lies, that might deliver him from this wicked world.

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DISC. XXV.

We do not ſay that the people may not be religious in popiſh countries, where the ſcripture is not allowed to be read as well as here, where there are many who cannot read it; for "the "grace of God is ſufficient" for all, and cannot be ſtopped when God pleaſes to give it: but ſtill, to forbid the uſe of the ſcripture is doing all that men can do to deſtroy religion. Beſides, there is a great deal of difference between the caſe of thoſe in a proteſtant catholic country, who cannot read the ſcriptures, and thoſe in a Roman catholic country, where none or but very few are allowed to do ſo: for in a proteſtant country, if one cannot read, others may read to him; and, by this reading, knowledge will be increaſed among the people: from which every one, thoſe who cannot read, and thoſe who do not conſider ſo much as they ought to do, will all receive ſome benefit. But certainly there muſt be great darkneſs and ignorance in popiſh countries, many deceitful errors, many fooliſh ſuperſtitions, which, by ſtanding inſtead of true religion,

DISC. XXV.

religion, muſt needs deſtroy it, by taking men's minds from it, and giving them ſome weak reed to reſt upon. Inſtead of the ſcriptures, they have only "the doctrines and traditions of "men;" inſtead of Chriſt, and his power, and his grace, to ſave them, they are taught to rely upon ſaints and angels, upon their own works, and even ſuch as are not always good. There is nothing we ſay, but the grace of Chriſt that is effectual to ſave ſinners: but they ſay, that ſo many prayers ſaid, ſuch works done, ſuch faſtings and penances, ſuch charity given to their prieſts or to religious houſes, will ſave wicked men and juſtify them before God. It is no wonder if they do not think of dying to ſin with Chriſt, and of being renewed by him to a new life of righteouſneſs and true holineſs, when they have other ſhorter ways, which are all on the outſide, and do not reach to the heart and mind which God requires. All this is the effect of *ſhutting up the ſcriptures* and the true word of God, which makes way for the doctrines

trines and the traditions of men. Hence, they forſake Chriſt as well as his word, and invent other ſaviours and other means of being ſaved: whereas it is expreſsly ſaid in ſcripture, that "there is no other name under heaven, by which "we muſt be ſaved, but only the name of our "Lord Jeſus Chriſt; that there is but *one* me-"diator between God and man, even the *Lord Christ*;" that they, therefore, who ſet up their own righteouſneſs, or any other name under heaven, by which they think that they can be ſaved, are contrary to Chriſt, becauſe they have not their only faith and hope in him. DISC. XXV.

But now let us apply what hath been ſaid to our own uſe and practice. Does not, then, the great injury, which popery does to religion, proceed at firſt from its *locking up the ſcriptures* from the people, and ſo bringing in an ignorance and neglect of true religion; though, indeed, it hath a falſe religion inſtead of the true? And hath God indeed ſo graciouſly delivered us from this

DISC. XXV.

this tyranny, and preſerved to us his greateſt bleſſing, the holy ſcriptures; and ſhall we bring all the bad effects of popery, the ſame ignorance and darkneſs upon ourſelves, by neglecting to read and ſtudy the ſcriptures, when God hath preſerved them to us and we have them in our own hands? The Bible is your religion; the liberty of reading, ſearching, and conſidering it is your birth-right as Chriſtians, and your greateſt happineſs. Will you, then, when you are not forbidden, but encouraged to read them, ſhut them up yourſelves? Let us reflect, that the greateſt difference between Proteſtants, or the Church of England, and Roman Catholics, or Papiſts, lies in this; that we are allowed and encouraged, and intreated earneſtly and continually, to read and to meditate upon the ſcriptures; to ſearch into them as for hidden treaſure, and to apply them to ourſelves; and that *they* are *not* allowed to do the ſame. But what difference will there be in this, if we live in the ſame ignorance and neglect of the ſcripture, and conſi-

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der it no more than they do? What difference will there be but this, that we ſhall live *without* religion, and that they have a *falſe* religion inſtead of the *true* one? But our condemnation will be greater than theirs, becauſe we neglect our religion wilfully and voluntarily, and they cannot look into it; becauſe we do, or may, know our maſter's will, and they cannot. No one can be truly thankful to God for our great deliverance as on this day, who does not know the bleſſedneſs of having the ſcriptures open to him, unleſs it be for temporal evils, from which we are delivered. But the preſervation of our holy religion is the greateſt bleſſing, as much as the world to come is better than this world. Let it be a ſhame to us then, as we are Proteſtants, as well as Chriſtians, not to love our bibles; (ſince it is by that we differ from them) let it be a ſhame to us, not to read them, if we can read; not to learn to read them if we poſſibly can; and to pray to Chriſt, or to God for Chriſt's ſake, to enlighten us the more with his grace and his ſpirit; DISC. XXV.

DISC. XXV.

ſpirit; which if we cannot read, will be ſufficient for us. And ought not every parent to take the greateſt care, (ſince the Bible is indeed our greateſt birth-right as Chriſtians, our privileges as Proteſtants; ſince the reading of it is ſo needful to keep the ſenſe of religion upon our minds) ought not, I ſay, every parent then to take the greateſt care, that his children be taught to read; if only, as it indeed ought to be, for that reaſon, above all others, that they may be able to read their Bibles, and to receive the greateſt benefit and comfort from them? For it is not for worldly ends, or to make them more able to do their worldly buſineſs, that ſchools are ſet up, and reading ſo much encouraged, as it is, in this Proteſtant nation; but it is for the ſake of the Bible itſelf, and becauſe our religion is in a book which is of the greateſt and the ſame concern to every one. Let parents, therefore, conſider, how much it lies upon them, to take care that their children may have the means of being virtuous and religious, when themſelves are gone

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to give an account to God for their care of them. And let them not bring them to ſin as well as poverty; for poverty with godlineſs and contentment is no ſin. If they can give or leave them little in this world, let them not deny them at leaſt the means of being for ever happy in the next. And let us all conſider the ſame thing for ourſelves. The miſery or happineſs of this world is comparatively of very ſmall account. But, if we think the evils of this world great and manifold, let us be careful not to loſe the happineſs and glory of the next. The poor and the rich are alike before God; nay, God hath rather choſen the poor in this world, if rich in faith and good works, and thoſe that have not their good things in this life, to make them heirs of ſalvation, and to raiſe them up to glory in the next, if by patient continuance in well doing they ſeek for it. Let thoſe, who have few other bleſſings or comforts, not loſe their hope in God. Now this hope is from the ſcriptures, in which are the words of eternal life; and it DISC. XXV.

DISC. XXV. is only from the ſcriptures that we can have ſuch an hope. Let us all, therefore, endeavour to know what is ſaid there, and to comfort ourſelves thereby, praying to God to enable us to underſtand and practiſe what we read or hear. If we underſtand but little, let us endeavour to practiſe that, and ſtill to know and practiſe more. Let this be our endeavour with conſtant and fervent prayer to God in the name of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, and he will aſſiſt and bleſs us. In the ſcriptures we have the worthieſt notions of the greatneſs of our ſalvation and future hope ſet before us. Theſe things ought, therefore, to be regarded more by us than any pleaſures or advantages we can hope for or deſire in this world. Let us, in the devout Collect of our excellent church, make it our daily prayer unto God, who hath "cauſed "all holy ſcriptures to be written for our learn-"ing, to grant us, that we may in ſuch wiſe "hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly "digeſt them; that, by patience and comfort

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" of his holy world, we may embrace and ever DISC.
" hold faſt the bleſſed hope of everlaſting life, XXV.
" which he hath given in our Saviour, Jeſus
" Chriſt."

DISCOURSE XXVI.

THE SERVICE REQUIRED OF CHRISTIANS.

JOHN IV. 23, 24.

The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth: for the father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they, that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

DISC. XXVI.

THIS is part of our Saviour's discourse with the woman of Samaria. The Samaritans were a people, that had departed from the temple of Jerusalem, where God had placed his name, and had set up a separate worship, against God's commandment,

commandment, in a mountain of their own. The woman, therefore, when she perceived that Christ was a prophet, or that he told her of things which she thought a stranger could not know, says to him (as asking his advice and instruction) "Our fathers worshipped in this "mountain; but ye say, that in Jerusalem is the "place where men ought to worship." Jesus answered her, "The hour cometh, when ye shall "neither in this mountain nor at Jerusalem "worship the Father:" *i. e.* the service of God appointed for a time, and fixed at Jerusalem, shall cease; so that then Jerusalem will not be the place, nor the service at Jerusalem the service, whereby only God may be acceptably worshipped; much less this mountain, which you have fixed without authority from God, and against his commandment: while God commanded to worship at Jerusalem, that was the true worship. Therefore, our Saviour says, that the Samaritans, having fallen from God's commandment, and the worship which he had taught, worshipped

DISC. XXVI.

DISC. XXVI.

they knew not what: that the Jews, having God's commandments, *knew what they worshipped*: "for ſalvation is of the Jews. But the hour "cometh, (ſays he) when the true worſhippers "ſhall worſhip the father in ſpirit and in truth." When Chriſt ſays, that the true worſhippers ſhould worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth, one thing meant is, that the true worſhip, which was now coming by the goſpel, ſhould be without the law of ſacrifices and ceremonies; without that form of ſervice, by which the worſhip of of God was, by God's own appointment, confined to Jeruſalem. And our Saviour ſays, that the *worship of Christians*, his diſciples, would not be leſs real, but conſtant and ſincere, in ſpirit, in the affections of the heart, and in truth, though with leſs of outward action and ceremony, than what had been appointed and commanded to the Jews: and what, therefore, our Saviour has directly ſaid in theſe words is

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1ſt. This; that the worſhip and ſervice of God, required from Chriſtians, is that which comes in the place of the former religion; *i. e.* a more reaſonable and a more perfect ſervice. DISC. XXVI.

2d. And what is to be obſerved ſecondly is, that our Saviour ſtill ſpeaks of the duty of Chriſtians, whatever it is, as a ſervice and a worſhip of God: that religion is, therefore, now indiſpenſable, becauſe it is the moſt natural and reaſonable way; it comes in the place of the former religion, and is more reaſonable and perfect.

The burdenſome rites and ceremonies of the Jewiſh worſhip are not required, but aboliſhed, by Chriſt. That worſhip was beſt for the time, according to God's wiſdom, which is above ours; becauſe, with a diſobedient people, inclined to dolatry and a ſinful worſhip of falſe gods, this burdenſome ſervice of the true God, as it ſuited their diſpoſitions and tempers, kept them em-

DISC. XXVI. ployed in the thought and ſervice of the true God, whom otherwiſe they would more have forgotten and neglected. But, according to the nature of men's minds, which, by minding one thing, often neglect another, it was likely that the ſacrifices and ceremonies of the law, ſo exact, and ſome of them ſo difficult to be obſerved, would take men's thoughts away from the "weightier matters of the law, juſtice, mercy, "faith, and the love of God." For men, being willing to ſatisfy themſelves as eaſily as they can, would ſay, we have done many things; we have performed all the ſacrifices and atonements which God requires of us; we cannot do every thing: what we do will atone for what we omit. For this reaſon it was intended, that at the proper time this whole law and ſervice, which had kept up the name of the true God in the world, but which, the ſcripture ſays, had made nothing perfect, ſhould be diſſolved; that a more ſpiritual worſhip and a better and truer righteouſneſs ſhould be brought in; a worſhip, in which would

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be no outward performance, but such as in the wisdom of God might best contribute to keep up his honour and best service in the world. *Such is the worship, the religion of Christians;* in which when we most directly worship God, it is without any sacrifices and offerings, but the sacrifices of our lips and the offerings of a free heart. Our worship is most reasonable; the holy ceremonies ordained by Christ, viz. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, both easy to be performed, and most likely and necessary to keep up the true remembrance of our faith, profession, and duty. It was appointed that Christians should meet every week, on the *first* day of the week, which is our *Sunday*, instead of on the *Jewish sabbath*, which was *Saturday*; to remember together the works of God's providence, his creation and our redemption and hopes of a better world. Other things were not appointed, because it was left to men to judge what would be the best; because the different circumstances of people may require different rules. Every

ART. XXVI.

Christian

DISC. XXVI. Christian ought, however, every day to pray to God who made him and preſerves him: but as to the public worſhip of many in one place, how often it would be convenient and beſt, ſo as not to hinder the neceſſary duties of life, this by the wiſdom and love of God to men was left to men to judge for the beſt. On one day in the week the aſſembling of ourſelves together was required; and it appears to have been conſtantly practiſed; and was ſo plain, being the conſequence of a former command of God, the command of the ſabbath, which we have reaſon to think was from the beginning of the world; that upon this account there is not any expreſs and direct command concerning it. It is plain that the Sunday muſt be kept holy: or, if this is not kept, then we are ſtill under the command of keeping another day, or the ſabbath of the Jews. What the love and kindneſs of God to men has made eaſy as to outward performance, it is required that we ſhould now fill up with a conſtant worſhip and ſervice of God in our hearts, in the real

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course and practice of our lives. "I beseech you," (saith St. Paul) "by the mercies of the living "God, that ye present your bodies a living sa- "crifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is "your reasonable service. Let no filthy com- "munication proceed out of your mouth, nor "jesting, nor foolish talking, but rather, giving "of thanks: whatsoever ye do, do all to the "glory of God, in the name of the Lord Jesus, "giving thanks to God and the Father through "him. In all things give thanks; for this is the "will of God concerning you." Thus it is that the worship of Christians is now *in spirit and in truth.* It is in *spirit,* because it is in the affections and in the heart; it is in *truth,* as it is instead of the outward service required by the law. The temple would be destroyed, and *Christians* themselves would be the *temple* of God, as the Apostle speaks. The outward shew and the trouble of sacrifices would cease; Christ himself would be the one all-sufficient, and perfect atonement; but Christians in their hearts and

DISC. XXVI.

DISC. XXVI. and lives would be a continual offering to God. The order and ſervice of prieſts to make atonement would be no more; there would be miniſters and teachers; and Chriſtians themſelves would be a prieſthood in other offices of worſhip and praiſe, every one offering to God the true ſacrifice of his heart, his duty, and his affections.

Thus it appears that the worſhip and ſervice of God, which is required of Chriſtians, is that which comes inſtead of the former religion of the Jews; that it is that in the ſpirit and real ſervice of our hearts, which the other was, as to a great part of it, in outward ceremonies; which had their beſt effect in this, that they *ſignified a better and purer ſervice.* But, if the ſervice and duty of Chriſtians comes inſtead of the ſervice required formerly of the Jews, (and that was moſt plainly a ſervice of God) then it is plain from this, that the ſervice now required of us is ſtill a religion and in the trueſt ſenſe a

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worship and service of God. We see by all our Saviour's example, that his great principle was to promote God's glory. He has made that the mark of his being true; and he hath taken care to teach us, that the first and great commandment is the love of God with all our hearts and affections; that the second is the love of our neighbour. We see throughout all the New Testament, the service required of Christians is spoken of always as a religion; that this is the first duty, and that all other duties are to proceed from it. And it could not be otherwise, as I said, if this new service came instead of that service of the Jews, and was signified by it. According to the gospel, a good life in general is the service of God; to praise God, and to thank him, and to pray to him, is instead of sacrifice. The same is true of every good action that we can do. With "*such sacrifices God is well pleased.*" It is required and supposed that these things are done with a regard to God, and that in every thing that is of

DISC. XXVII.

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DISC. XXVI. any moment we conſider our duty to him. Religion is plainly, according to the ſcriptures, the firſt and higheſt duty, and that which is to lead us to every other. For, though it is ſeen too often, that thoſe, who profeſs religion, are wanting in many, the moſt neceſſary, duties; and though ſome, who ſhew too little regard for religion, are ſometimes found to do a great many of their duties well, and better than thoſe who profeſs religion; yet ſtill religion muſt be what it is, the firſt and higheſt duty in it's nature, and the true principle of every thing elſe that is good. And for this reaſon it is men profeſs it, thinking it the higheſt of all duties; and not intending always to deceive by the appearance, but endeavouring, and, perhaps, meaning, to be good, though they are not able, by not uſing all the proper means to be ſo. There is great reaſon, that we ſhould be ſincere, and that, therefore, we ſhould be moderate in outward profeſſions. But we ought to be ſatisfied, and to ſee clearly, that this is our firſt and higheſt duty; that the love of

God,

God and our Saviour is the first and governing principle of our lives. Now it is easy for every one to satisfy himself of this by the first notions which he has of God, and by considering what a Saviour has done for him. If there is a gratitude or duty to men, how much greater is there to him who created and who redeemed us; to him, who gives us all the blessings of life, who really gives every thing, which others seem to give? It is to him, therefore, that our first service is due; to love him is the first and great commandment. DISC. XXVI.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXVII.

THE LEPER CLEANSED.

MATT. VIII. 1, 2.

When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold! there came a leper, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

DISC. XXVII.

THE miracle noticed in the text is in many reſpects very remarkable, and deſerves our conſideration. When our Saviour was come down from the mountain, and great multitudes followed him, behold, a leprous man came, and, bowing himſelf before him, ſaid, "Lord, if "thou

"thou wilt, thou canſt make me clean." The leproſy, of which we read often in the goſpels, and which is ſometimes ſeen among us, is a miſerable diſtemper; the more ſo becauſe it was avoided on account of the infection; and to touch a leprous perſon was forbidden by the law, both on that account, and becauſe the leproſy itſelf was an emblem of a ſinful life, of it's miſery and it's impurities. The great cautions about this diſtemper were to teach men to have a dread of ſin and it's miſeries. It is the moſt difficult to cure by any human means. In this condition this poor man, having heard before of our Saviour's miracles, and having juſt notions of the power of God, that with him nothing is impoſſible, but that we are not judges for him, what is proper or fit for him, and what he will do; and, knowing or believing Chriſt to be a divine perſon, and one that repreſented to men on earth the power and wiſdom of God, he bowed himſelf before him, and ſaid, "Lord, if thou wilt, "thou canſt make me clean." He does not

DISC. XXVII.

DISC. XXVII.

presume to judge what is proper for him to do; he does not presume to ask; he only says, and has no doubt of this, that, if it was proper for him, and if he himself was a proper object for his mercy and pity, he could make him clean. The faith which he had was a confidence in the divine power and goodness in general. To incline his goodness and his will to heal him, he had this as one qualification; he confessed his power, he acknowledged his goodness, and had submission to his will. He was not impatient nor forward. Our Saviour, therefore, since this poor leper had the opinion that he ought to have of his power, and such as he ought to have of his goodness and of his will in general to do good, but could not know and would not judge what was proper for him to do in any particular case, or for himself, tells him what he wanted to know, "I will; be thou clean."

It is evident, therefore, that the leprous man was accepted and approved, in some measure,

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for his having a juſt opinion and belief of God's own almighty power; or that, though his diſtemper was by all human means incurable or moſt difficult to be healed, yet he thought that our Saviour could, by a word's ſpeaking, make him clean and heal him. DISC. XXVII.

What I ſhall endeavour, therefore, to ſhew at this time is, for what reaſons this faith and juſt opinion of God's power is required and approved ſo much, as we ſhall find in the hiſtory of our Saviour's actions and miracles; for this is one qualification that he requires; "Do ye *be-*"*lieve* that I can do it?" Do ye believe that there is a power by which theſe things, that are above the ordinary courſe and cuſtom of nature, can be done? And the reaſons which I ſhall give why ſuch a belief and juſt opinion is approved and required will be theſe:

1ſt. That no other opinion than this is worthy of his power, and that, unleſs we think he has

DISC. XXVII. a power to do above what is natural or cuſtomary in the courſe of his providence, it is not to have the belief and opinion of God that is worthy of him, or ſufficient to make us worſhip and to depend upon him in this life.

2d. That the hope of another life, of another being, and of another happineſs, beyond this world; this hope cannot be at all, unleſs we have a clear and an undoubting belief of God's power being above this world, and being free to do what he will, and that he has now in ſtore, or will ſhew in his due time, quite other things than this world, quite other beings and places, in which we may dwell with him in another and different ſtate, and for which, by his own extraordinary power, we ſhall be fitted and qualified.

1ſt. And firſt of all, it is not to have a worthy opinion of God's power, nor ſufficient for the purpoſes of religion in this life, if we do not

not think that his power is above this world, or that, though himſelf has ordered the courſe of things and ſuffers it to go on according to the rules which himſelf has appointed, yet he himſelf cannot break or be above theſe rules, when he thinks proper. DISC. XXVII.

It is ſomething if we think the world itſelf was ordered by God, and all its other main rules and laws appointed by him, and cannot be continued or go on without him. It is ſomething, and a part of religion, to think and to believe moſt firmly, what is indeed moſt plain, that theſe things are from God, and that they cannot be, nor continue as they are, without him; and to think beſides that, in regard to God's government and his providence towards men, there are many rules and diſpoſitions good, and merciful and juſt; that ſin and wickedneſs ſhall, by their own effects, or by ſome reſentment of men towards them, have their own puniſhment, in ſome degree, and with certainty, in this life;

DISC. XXVII.

and that the worſhip and ſervice of God, and doing our duty to men, will have, in ſome meaſure, by the ſame means, ſome reward or ſome advantage in this life. But it will be plain, if we conſider it, that this is not a belief that is ſufficient. For, firſt of all, if we do not think that God can do what he will, that he can even break or go beyond his own laws to enforce them in particular caſes; if we do not think that this is ſometimes done, we ſhall not long maintain our belief that he firſt of all made the world and appointed its laws. Or, if we think that theſe laws and the courſe of things are always juſt according to the deſerts or merits of perſons, we ſhall make the world itſelf a God, and give it a perfection, a wiſdom or goodneſs that it is not poſſible it ſhould have. It is, therefore, neceſſary in this world, that we ſhould think that God himſelf interpoſes, though ſecretly and inviſibly; that he himſelf enforces his own laws for our good or puniſhment, or that he can and does, when he thinks fit, by his own will, and

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by his own act, reward or punish us even in this life. The belief, therefore, of God's extraordinary power is necessary to us at present. And for this reason it is kept up so much in scripture: and in the Old Testament this is the effect of so many miracles which we see there. The religion of the Jews was plainly founded upon miracles; which shew how necessary a support they are of the most natural and common trust in God in respect of this life. From the beginning of the Old Testament it is all a remarkable series of miracles, some great and general, such as the creation of the world at first, and the destruction of it for sin; the calling the children of Israel out of Egypt, the particular acts of God's favour or his justice to particular persons; as his calling of Abraham, and leading him out of his country, and protecting him upon all necessary occasions, as he did the other patriarchs; and, after these, the many remarkable instances of God's favour, or his severity, to particular persons or places. It was upon those great and ge- DISC. XXVII.

DISC. XXVII.

neral favours of God, the deliverance of his people by ſigns and wonders in a miraculous manner from Egypt, that the good men of thoſe times loved to dwell; to raiſe their gratitude and their hope, and truſt in God's providence upon all occaſions, to deliver, or to puniſh and afflict them, according to their deſerts. And we are not to think that God does not now govern the world, as well as formerly, or that he does not now conſider and regard every thing that is done. But it is not now by open miracles, but by his own real and effectual power working upon natural cauſes, and directing them for his purpoſe; which is as really God's own power, as if it were more apparent, or as it is in the miracles of ſcripture: we muſt think that God at all times is able to do more than we can hope for or expect from the natural courſe of things. But we cannot judge what is proper for God to do: we have the more reaſon, therefore, to ſubmit and to reſign ourſelves entirely to his will: whatever croſſes or hardſhips or difficulties

ties he may bring upon us, we have reaſon to ſubmit entirely, and to reſign ourſelves to God, to what he wills, and what he ſees to be beſt for us in this life; becauſe now we know more clearly and certainly than his people did formerly, that there is a life to come, in which all things will be made even, which is not poſſible in this life, for this reaſon; becauſe another time will come, when God's own power, his own examination and judgment of all our actions and of all our thoughts and intentions will ſet every thing right, as it ought to be. For this reaſon ſome things are left uneven and unequal. We do not ſuffer now as much as we deſerve; or we ſuffer what God in his goodneſs will make amends for, and which he permits to be now; becauſe it is neceſſary for us, that we may not, as we are inclined to do, fix all our thoughts entirely upon this world, but may be forced, by theſe ſufferings and afflictions which God ſends now in this life, to remember that there is another life and another world, where God will DISC. XXVII.

make

DISC. XXVII. make the juſt and exact difference; when we ſhall be puniſhed or rewarded, accordingly as we have ſerved him, or have loved and depended upon him, or elſe have neglected and diſobeyed him; when every thing will either be better or worſe to us than now. This hope of a future life, of another very different ſtate from this preſent, will be promoted, and depends upon our having a juſt opinion of God's providence and his care for men in this life. For if now the juſtice and goodneſs of God could ſuffer all things to go on according to their natural courſe, if we do not think that we are now in his hands, and under his care and power, we ſhall not be able to believe that there will be another time, in which all things will be ſet right; in which we ſhall ſuffer for every ſin, if not repented of and forgiven now, and by God's infinite mercy and kindneſs have every good or right thing, that ever we could do or endeavoured to do, repaid to us by his good meaſure, preſſed down and ſhaken together, and running over, of which

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our Saviour ſpeaks, and that it will be poured into our boſom. I ſay we muſt think that there is now a power and goodneſs of God in the world that works, however ſecretly, and that at leaſt remarks and ſets down every thing, as in a book, to which the ſcripture compares it. And we muſt remember that there have been formerly a time and many ages, in which God ſhewed his power and his goodneſs manifeſtly, by his extraordinary things, above and different from the courſe of this world; which, therefore, are called miracles, and known to be the acts and interpoſition of God himſelf. For which reaſon theſe things are recorded for our inſtruction and admonition, as the Apoſtle ſays, in the latter age of the world; in which apparent miracles would ceaſe, but the power and goodneſs of God, though unſeen, and not clearly to be diſtinguiſhed from natural things, ought ſtill to be believed, as a foundation of a more firm faith and confidence in God, the foundation of religion in this preſent life. It will lead us to believe and to fix

DISC. XXVII.

all

DISC. XXVII. all our thoughts upon a life to come. For, if he is now in some measure the rewarder and friend of those who serve him, we may hope he will be more so, that he will be perfectly so, when his great time comes.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH.

GENESIS XXXIX. 9.

How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

THE hiſtory of Joſeph and his brethren affords the beſt inſtruction to us all, and eſpecially teaches parents in what manner they ſhould bring up their children; viz. in the faith and fear of God; in the fear of offending God and of ſinning againſt him: for this is the great thing that children ought firſt to be taught, as that in which their happineſs not only in the next world but even

DISC. XXVIII. even in this alſo depends more than all other things.

For theſe reaſons I ſhall firſt of all relate what is moſt remarkable in this hiſtory, according to the ſcriptures; and then, ſecondly, I ſhall make ſuch obſervations as will moſt properly ariſe from the conſideration of it.

And firſt, It is ſaid, that Jacob or Iſrael loved Joſeph more than all his children: of which particularly we ſee the ſad conſequences; viz. that "when his brethren ſaw this, that Jacob loved "him more than all his brethren, they hated "him, and could not ſpeak peaceably unto him. "And he dreamed a dream, which he told them. "Hear the dream, ſays he, which I have dream-"ed:" we were binding ſheaves in the fields, "and lo! my ſheaf aroſe, and alſo ſtood up-"right! and behold! your ſheaves ſtood round "about, and made obeiſance unto my ſheaf." And he dreamed another dream, and told it to his

his brethren; (in which he was not prudent; for he might have judged that his dreams would give offence) he ſaid, "I have dreamed a dream "more; and behold! the ſun and the moon "and the eleven ſtars made obeiſance unto me." He told this to his father, as well as to his brethren; and his father rebuked him for it, and ſaid,—"Shall I, and thy mother, and thy "brethren, come indeed to bow ourſelves to "thee to the earth?" And his brethren, it is ſaid, envied him: and his father obſerved what he ſaid: and his brethren, it is ſaid, went to feed their father's flock in Schechem; and his father ſent him to them to ſee how they were; and he went to ſee for them; and, when they ſaw him coming to them, when he was afar off, before he came up to them, they conſpired againſt him to ſlay him: and they ſaid one to another, "Behold, this dreamer cometh!" "Come, now, therefore, let us ſlay him, and "throw him into ſome pit; and we will ſay, "Some evil beaſt hath devoured him, and we "ſhall

DISC. XXVIII.

DISC. XXVIII.

"ſhall ſee what will become of his dreams!" But one of them ſaid, "Let us not kill him, but "throw him into this pit which is in the wilder-"neſs;" (where no one would be likely to meet with him) and this he ſaid to get him out of their hands, that he might bring him to his father again. And "they did ſo." They threw him into a pit, and they ſat down to eat. But, looking round, they ſaw a company of Iſhmaelites, with their camels, bearing ſpices, and balm, and myrrh, to carry it down into Egypt; for they were merchants. Then another of them ſaid to his brethren, "Why ſhould we ſlay our bro-"ther and conceal his blood? Let us ſell him "to the Iſhmaelites, and let not our hands be "upon him; for he is our brother and our fleſh. "And they ſold him to the Iſhmaelites for twenty "pieces of ſilver. And they took Joſeph with them (where they were going) into Egypt, and they ſold him to Potiphar, who was an officer of Pharaoh, and a man of riches and ſubſtance. And "the Lord," it is ſaid, "was with Joſeph,"

and

and he was a prosperous man, and his master DISC. XXVIII.
saw that the Lord was with him, "and that he
"made all that he did to prosper in his hand;
"and, therefore, he made him overseer in his
"house, and all that he had he put in his hand."
Now Joseph had been bred up in that fear of
God, which is the best and truest wisdom. But
the Egyptians, who were at that time the chief
and the most flourishing nation of the world, were
of the children of men the most skillful in
worldly arts and policy, and were worldly peo-
ple. They lived in affluence and in plenty,
without the fear of God; and Potiphar's wife,
who it is probable was one that had been bred up
in luxury and in idleness, seeing Joseph to be a
comely person, tempted him to lie with her. But
his answer was, "Behold, my master has such
confidence in me, "that he takes no notice what
"is with me in the house, but has committed
"all that he has to my hand. There is none
"greater in his family than I, neither hath he
"kept back any thing from me but thee, be-

DISC. XXVIII. "cauſe thou art his wife. How then can I do "this great wickedneſs and ſin againſt God?" Though this was good and honeſt, yet God thought fit to try him, and to bring him into hardſhips: for, by his miſtreſs's accuſing him to her huſband, he was caſt into priſon, and there was kept until God thought fit to releaſe him: for now he ſent dreams to Pharaoh, by which he might be warned of the years of plenty and ſcarcity that would come, that he might, by the means of Joſeph, be warned in the years of plenty, to provide for the ſcarcity that would follow: and when Joſeph, by the wiſdom which God had given him, had interpreted the dreams to Pharaoh's ſatisfaction, he was put over all the land of Egypt: and, when the years of dearth came, and Pharaoh, by Joſeph's warning, had laid up the corn, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread; and, Joſeph opened all the ſtorehouſes, and ſold to the Egyptians; and the people of all the countries round about came to Egypt to buy corn; and the ſons of Jacob came to Egypt to buy

buy corn, among thoſe that came: and, "becauſe "Joſeph was the governor, and he it was that ſold "to all the people of the land, the ſons of Jacob "came to Joſeph, and *bowed themselves* before "him; and Joſeph knew them, but made himſelf "ſtrange to them, and ſpake roughly to them;" which you will ſee was not from any ill-will, but as good-natured people are uſed to do; and where they mean to be kind, they pretend very often to be rough. So Joſeph did: and he ſaid to them, "Whence come ye? And they ſaid, from "the land of Canaan to buy food: and he an-"ſwered them roughly, and ſaid to them, ye "are ſpies, to ſee the nakedneſs of the land "ye are come." I will not relate to you every particular, becauſe it will be better that you ſhould read theſe things yourſelves in the Bible. But you may remember that when he had got them to tell their condition at home, ("thy ſer-"vants are twelve brethren, the ſons of one "man in the land of Canaan," and the youngeſt is this day with our father, and one is not; by DISC. XXVIII.

DISC. XXVIII.

which he knew himself was meant, whom they had sold, and had heard nothing more of him) he said, "By this shall ye be proved, whether "you are spies and come here into this country "upon a bad intent, or not; send one of you, "and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be "kept in prison, that your words may be proved, "whether there be any truth in you:" and he put them all into prison three days, and on the third day, by the time they were humbled, he said, to them, "This do and live; for I "fear God;" (pretending to be a good and a reasonable man; which indeed he was: and the fear of God is that from which all mercy and goodness comes) "if ye be true men let one "of your brethren be bound." Before he said, they should only send one to fetch him, and the rest should all stay in prison till he came: but now only one is to be kept: and he turned himself about from them and wept, and returned to them again and communed with them: but he took from them Simeon, who was one of them,

and

and bound him before their eyes; and he commanded to fill their ſacks with corn, and to reſtore their money into their ſacks, and ſend them away. When they came home and found their money returned, "they were afraid," it is ſaid, "and ſo was their father." He had the grief beſides to find that one of his ſons was kept as a pledge: and it was with great difficulty that he was prevailed upon, when they were to go again, to ſend Benjamin with them. But when the eldeſt (Reuben) told him that they could not dare to go again, unleſs they brought their brother with them, he at laſt conſented to let them go, and ordered them to take money for what they were to buy, and the money that was returned, to take it with them; unleſs, peradventure, it might be a miſtake. When they came, they told them honeſtly, that they had found their money returned to them, and that they had brought it back with them; for they knew not, they ſaid, who had put it into their ſacks. Therefore they had brought it back with DISC. XXVIII.

DISC. XXVIII. them: and Joſeph, it is ſaid, "aſked them of "their father, the good old man of whom they "ſpake: is he yet alive?" And when they had told him that he was very well, and when he ſaw Benjamin, of whom he had ſpoken to them, "He made haſte from them, (for his bowels did "yearn upon his brother) and he ſought where "to weep; and he went into his chamber and "wept there." Then he prepared himſelf and made a dinner for them, and afterwards he ſent them away, but thought of a device to bring them back again in fear. He ordered the ſteward of his houſe to fill the ſacks, and to put in not only the money but the ſilver cup into the ſack of the youngeſt, becauſe he knew he was the favourite, for whom they would be the moſt in fear; and, when they were gone, then he bade his ſervant follow them, and examine which of them had carried away the cup. And they ſaid, God forbid that we ſhould do ſuch a thing as this. Behold! the money that was returned to us before we brought it back again. How then

ſhould

ſhould we ſteal out of my Lord's houſe ſilver or gold? The ſervant was ordered to bring him back on whom it ſhould be found; but they all came back with him in great diſtreſs; they came to Joſeph, and fell before him to the ground; and one of them ſaid, "What ſhall "we ſay unto my lord? What ſhall we ſpeak? "Or how ſhall we clear ourſelves? God hath "found out the iniquity of thy ſervants. Be- "hold we are all thy bond-ſervants. Both we "and he alſo with whom the cup is found." and he ſaid, "God forbid, that he ſhould do ſo. "But he, upon whom the cup is found, ſhall "be my bond-ſervant: and as for you, go you "up in peace unto your father." Then Judah told him all their diſtreſs, how hard they had begged of their father to have this ſon with them; that, if he ſhould be loſt too, their father could not live; that "they ſhould bring down "his grey hairs with ſorrow to the grave." Then Joſeph could not refrain himſelf before all thoſe that ſtood by him: and he ſent them all out; DISC. XXVIII.

DISC. XXVIII. and then he made himſelf known to his brethren: and he wept aloud and ſaid, I am Joſeph! He told them alſo *what* he was, and ſaid, "Be not grieved nor angry with yourſelves, that "ye ſold me hither; for God did ſend me before you to preſerve life; haſte you, and go up "to my father, and ſay to him, Thus ſaith thy "ſon Joſeph; God hath made me lord of Egypt; "come down to me, tarry not; and thou ſhalt "dwell in the land of Goſhen, and thou ſhalt "be near unto me, thou and thy children; and "you ſhall tell my father of all my glory in "Egypt, and all that you have ſeen, and ye ſhall "haſte and bring down my father. And he "wept upon his brother's neck." They went to bring their father and their own children and families; and they came, and had a place allotted them by Pharaoh; where they increaſed and became a nation, according to God's deſign and his purpoſe: for here it was, by the wiſdom of God, that the Jews were to be bred up, and were to meet after this with hardſhips and ſevere

ſevere and cruel oppreſſions under a people and kings that were tyrannous. They were to know, by experience, what miſery it was to be ſubject to worldly people, however great and proſperous, but without true religion or the fear of God, or to live with them. That they might know how much better it is to ſerve God, and to have him for our maſter only: and into which liberty he himſelf brought them, when he delivered them from the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage. He ſet them free, till they themſelves choſe other gods, or other maſters; which God often brought upon them, when they at firſt ſold themſelves to ſin and to their own evil deſires; from which they could not be free till another deliverance ſhould come; till a Saviour ſhould come, who would deliver them from the hands of thoſe their greateſt enemies, "and "guide them into the way of peace." DISC. XXVIII.

And firſt of all, in this ſtory we ſee a remarkable inſtance of the power of God, and of his ruling

DISC. XXVIII.

ruling over all things, and of his making all his things ſerve for good or ill to every one, according to his purpoſe. We ſee a youth, whom his father loved too fondly; whom his brothers hated by their ill-temper; and ſomething, as I ſaid, from the father's partiality and his own imprudence: we ſee him ſold to be a ſlave; but in that condition we ſee him doing all his duty well; being faithful and juſt to his maſter, both out of gratitude as well as duty: becauſe he was truſted, he would not wrong him: we ſee him accuſed wrongfully, brought into difficulties, and put into priſon (by a falſe accuſation) for an act of true virtue and faithfulneſs. But God finds a way to deliver him and bring him to honour: and his brothers are brought and bow themſelves before him, according to his dream. He knew them and remembered his dream, it is ſaid. But he does not think of uſing them ill, but thinks of a way to bring them into fear, which does them good, and makes his real and great kindneſs to them the more truly acceptable. It was the

way

way indeed to cure all their fears, and to satisfy them that he was truly reconciled to them. At last we see, after these trials of them, and of himself, his tender affection towards them breaks out. When he had brought them into their last distress, that of sending them back without their brother, whom they had been charged by their father to bring back, he could not refrain before all that were present, but he wept aloud. We see that before, when he brought them into their first trial, that of keeping Simeon till they returned, he then was ready to burst into tears, but he turned himself about from them and wept, and then came to them again; and then was able to do what he intended; (for all was from real kindness) "he bound Simeon before their eyes." He was, therefore, a truly affectionate and good brother, and not the less so for appearing rough to them: but this made the kindness to them the more agreeable; and it was intended for their good. His present greatness and honour, being so much above what they ever thought of, and DISC. XXVIII.

DISC. XXVIII.

and what they intended for him, he did not make any ill uſe of. It was a very wicked deſign: but yet they were brothers. Their ill-will he knew aroſe from natural paſſions, from jealouſy, (for which there ought never to have been any reaſon given) and though they were his brothers, though they were God's children in ſome ſort, being bred up under his care and in his religion; they might have great faults, which if God had forgiven, he was obliged to forgive too: he was a brother: he wept for them. He did not reſent when it was in his power, which would have been cruel and ill-natured.

But I ſhall now, as I propoſed, make ſome remarks and obſervations that will moſt properly ariſe from this remarkable ſtory which I have ſet before you.

From what I have ſaid to you now, or when you read it yourſelves, you cannot but obſerve how dutiful a ſon he was as well as a kind brother; what

DISC. XXVIII.

what care he took for his father and for the whole family, when he had it in his power; how he ſent for them, and uſed his great intereſt and favour in Pharaoh's preſence for their benefit. He nouriſhed and provided for them all, with all their families. Such power God had given him as the bleſſing and reward of his goodneſs.

This is the chief thing which I ſhall obſerve laſt of all; not only by what means and by what kind of teaching at home; not only that he came to be raiſed ſo high, and came to ſuch proſperity as we have ſeen; that he was ſo truly kind and affectionate; ſo kind a brother and ſo good a ſon; it was by his being juſt and honeſt, by his keeping himſelf from all ſins, that his heart was preſerved ſo good. Thoſe who are wicked for their own purpoſes, or diſhoneſt, or lewd, grow hard, and unnatural, and loſe all their good affections. What was it then that made him ſo juſt and good, and that preſerved him in the greateſt trials from committing ſins? It

was

DISC. XXVIII.

was plainly a true ſenſe of religion and the fear of God; it was that conſideration which he had when ill things were propoſed to him; "Has not "my maſter entruſted me with every thing, and "does he not expect and deſerve that I ſhould "be faithful to him? How then can I do this "great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?" When he was not tempted, when he had no inclination to do his brothers any injury, he gives this reaſon, which would have reſtrained him, if he had been tempted, or had been inclined to uſe them ill, I ſhall not do it—"I fear God!" This is the true principle that made him good. This is that which would have made his brothers good, as he was; which would have reſtrained them from the ill that they did him, if they had not choſen to give themſelves up to their own jealouſy. However, though their paſſions got the better of their principles at that time, and indeed in other caſes; (for they were not good nor perfect, but committed at ſeveral times great faults) yet ſtill we may ſee that they have ſome conſideration,

which

which was the effect of religion and of their having been taught it at home. It was this that made them ſay one to another, when their diſtreſſes came upon them, "we are verily guilty "concerning our brother, in that we ſaw the "anguiſh of his ſoul, when he beſought us, and "we would not hear; therefore is this diſtreſs "come upon us." We ſee beſides that ſome good things ſtill remained with them from the good, and the honeſt education they had at home. They did not chooſe to do any thing that was unjuſt, for conſcience ſake; for that would be a ſcandal and a reproach to them. They brought their money back, which they knew did not belong to them: they "did not "know by what means it was returned to them," and they brought it back. When the cup was found upon one of them, in what diſtreſs were they? "Behold! we brought that back which "was returned to us; becauſe we did not know "how it was. How then ſhould we be guilty of "taking away any ſilver or gold by ſtealth; or

DISC. XXVIII.

"how

DISC. XXVIII. "how could we think of such a thing?" This was the good effect of their good instruction at home, even in them who had other great faults: but in Joseph we see how much greater effects religion produced: it made him pious, just and honest, kind and affectionate, relenting and forgiving; dutiful, sober, chaste, and temperate, and free from all great sins! The fear of God, and of offending him, was the ruling principle of all his life! When any temptation assailed him, he asked himself, "How can I do this "great wickedness, and sin against God?"*

DISCOURSE

* This Discourse does not appear to have been preached, and is not, perhaps, quite finished. It is, however, preserved for the sake of the many pious and practical reflections that are contained in it.

DISCOURSE XXIX.

THE NECESSITY AND BENEFITS OF TRIALS AND AFFLICTIONS.

JAMES I. 12.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

BY temptation, in these words, is meant chiefly that kind of trial which arises from sufferings or afflictions; for these are certainly trials of virtue and patience, and there is danger of their leading us into sin; for which reason our Saviour has taught us to pray that we may not

DISC. XXIX.

DISC. XXIX.

be led into temptation; meaning chiefly this kind of trial in the words of my text, but not excluding others. But here, it is ſaid, that "He is bleſſed who endureth temptation;" *i. e.* he, who goes through and bears it well: "for, "when he has been tried," (like ſilver in the fire) "he ſhall receive that crown of life, which "the Lord hath promiſed to them that love "him."

It ſeems to be ſaid here, that it is neceſſary we ſhould be firſt tried in this manner, before we are received into another world. Or, if it is not ſaid here expreſſly, it is more plainly in other places, that there muſt be afflictions and ſufferings; or, at leaſt, that none muſt expect to be excuſed from them; eſpecially ſince we ſee that all the beſt and holieſt of men have not been excuſed, but have had a great ſhare of theſe trials.

And,

And, that we may be able to bear what may fall to our ſhare, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew plainly what are the reaſons for which this is ſo ordered, ſo that it is indeed unavoidable, or really neceſſary for our trueſt and greateſt good. DISC. XXIX.

And, firſt of all, let it be conſidered, that, generally ſpeaking, the greateſt part of our ſufferings and afflictions ariſes from ourſelves and from our own fault. It is our own unreaſonableneſs very often that is the occaſion of them. We allow ourſelves to think that all the world ought to ſerve us, and to be made entirely for our pleaſure or intereſt, or ſomething like this. But every other perſon has his own will as well as we; and every other has as good a reaſon to think that every thing ought to ſerve him, and that every thing ſhould be ordered for his pleaſure or convenience. Now, while this is ſo, it is impoſſible that we ſhould all be pleaſed. It is indeed impoſſible, but every one muſt meet continually with afflictions, diſappointments, and real ſufferings. But it is evident that theſe af-

DISC. XXIX.

flictions and sufferings proceed from our own unreasonableness; from our own pride or self-will, when we have not every thing to our own desire and satisfaction. There is but one way, it is plain, to escape these sufferings and afflictions; which is by learning to submit our will and our affections to the will of God, and to his wisdom and goodness, who has designed every thing for the best and greatest good of all, and not for the pleasure or convenience of only one or of a few. We must learn to be content with our share, a sufficient and moderate one, of convenience to ourselves, such as God's providence has appointed and measured out to us. We must learn to rejoice with others, and to find our own good and satisfaction in their happiness and prosperity; or, at least, to be content that others should be as easy and as happy as possible. If we learn this, and bring ourselves to this disposition of mind, it is plain that an infinite number of afflictions, disappointments, and sufferings, which now we meet with continually, will cease.

ceaſe. So that theſe are from our own fault, and cannot but be, till we come to have that ſubmiſſion to God's providence, and that regard for the good of others, as well as our own, which we ought to have. DISC. XXIX.

But 2dly, It is true there are afflictions and ſufferings, and ſorrows, which it is not, as in the other caſe, a fault in us to be ſenſible of; but ſuch as we ought to feel when God ſends them upon us. Thus a great degree of hardſhips, inconvenience or poverty, is a real ſuffering, though it may and ought to be borne with contentment and ſubmiſſion: pain and ſickneſs are great and real afflictions, though we ought ſtill to bear theſe with patience and with hope of a deliverance from them. Some things there are, and the moſt real bleſſings, ſuch as friends, relations, and many other things, which it is the ſign of a good diſpoſition to be pleaſed with; and, therefore, it is not a fault to be grieved and afflicted with the loſs of them. Such afflictions as

DISC. XXIX.

theſe do not ariſe from our own fault; for it is not a fault to be ſenſible of them; and yet they are intended by providence; and, if we bear them with due diſpoſition, they will tend to our greateſt good. They ſerve to perfect and to improve our virtue, our patience, ſubmiſſion, and duty to God, which is true virtue and goodneſs. They teach us to place our happineſs in him who is our everlaſting good, which cannot fail. They teach us to ſubmit our wills to his, which is real goodneſs, or is always the trial of it. In our beſt affections, in our love and deſire of the beſt things, there may be, and there is always, ſomething that is blameable, if our affections are ſo fixed upon them, that we cannot part with them with contentment and reſignation. This attachment and fixing of our minds to any particular thing God intends to cure in his ſervants and thoſe who are well diſpoſed, by taking from them the thing which they love or deſire too much; which brings them to think of him the more, who is goodneſs itſelf,

ſelf, whoſe favour is more than all other things; who ought above all things to be loved. It teaches us beſides to think of a time, when all thoſe things we do well to love will be again reſtored to us. We ſhall hereafter have every thing that is good and that it is virtue and goodneſs to be concerned for: we ſhall have our friends more perfect and more amiable than they are now: we ſhall have every bleſſing and convenience and advantage for knowledge and goodneſs, which now, perhaps, we want, and which it is no fault but grace and goodneſs to deſire; and yet ſtill it is a true proof of goodneſs to be content, ſince it is God's will at preſent, that we ſhould be without them. We ſhall be capable of more knowledge, and be more wiſe and good hereafter. If we know now as much as we can of good things; if we endeavour to be now as good, as ſincerely to love God, and to do all our duty to him, as we can, amidſt the hindrances of this life, it is ſufficient; to be content with this, and to wait for another time, this is the trueſt goodneſs that we can ſhew at preſent.

DISC. XXIX.

DISC. XXIX.

3dly, By this we see that trials and wants are the means to improve and to increase our virtue; to give us the truest virtue of all, which is submission to God's will.

Another thing is that they are the means, and no more than necessary, to keep us from sin and worldly affections. We have at all times too much reason to think of ourselves, that, if we had every thing entirely to our own satisfaction and desire, it would not be best for us. We cannot bear to have every thing according to our own will. Too much prosperity and satisfaction is apt to make us forget ourselves, and, by too much joy and pleasure, to fall first into forgetfulness of God, and too great love of worldly things, and after this into sin. It is a weakness that belongs to men, that they cannot bear too much success or prosperity; and, therefore, some things that are grievous, or contrary to our wills, are necessary to check our minds, and to bring them into due temper and moderation. It was

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the prayer of a wiſe man, that "God would "give him neither poverty nor riches:" and we may, with the ſame reaſon, ſay in general, Neither too much ſatisfaction, nor too much ſorrow or affliction; leaſt, on the one ſide, we ſhould be tempted to forget God; or, on the other, to ſpeak or to think ill of his providence, and by impatience to ſin againſt him. DISC. XXIX.

In this manner we may ſee what is the uſe of ſufferings and afflictions even to the virtuous and well-diſpoſed. And the reaſon why I ſpeak of this is, becauſe I think in general that it is a great diſcouragement to many perſons, who have had ſerious thoughts of religion and have made good reſolutions; it is a diſcouragement to them, I ſay, to find that they are not even now free from ſorrows, ſufferings, and afflictions, which perhaps they expected to be: for, having found diſappointments and vexations enough in a way of ſin and wickedneſs, (which always will be the caſe) they expect, perhaps, when they come to religion,

DISC. XXIX.

religion, to find that all these will be remedied; that they shall have no more sorrow nor affliction; which is promised only for another life. Now that this may not be our case, I have endeavoured to give the reasons for which it is so ordered, that even the good and virtuous must have sorrows and afflictions. And indeed what I have aimed at this time has been to shew that we ought not to expect it to be otherwise, but to think that this world is not the place where we are to expect so great happiness; but that in this life continually, and for our good, we must have always some uneasiness and some affliction attending us. To know this and not to expect otherwise is best. And all that is necessary on the other side to be remembered is, that, though there are always some afflictions to the good, as well as to the bad, yet there is a great difference between them in this present life; that the disappointments of the wicked are more bitter and grievous in themselves, because there is no goodness to soften them; no submission or resignation

nation to the will of God, which makes afflictions tolerable now; and that they have no hope of that future life, which alone can be perfectly happy, when all sorrows and afflictions shall be done away. DISC. XXIX.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXX.

PRESENT SUFFERINGS NOT TO BE COMPARED WITH FUTURE GLORY.

ROM. VIII. 18.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.

DISC. XXX.

"WE are heirs of God," says the Apostle in the words next before these, "joint-heirs with "Christ; partakers of his glory and his happi-"ness; if so be that we suffer with him, that "we may be also glorified together." Where it is plain, that the Apostle seems to make it a necessary condition of happiness or glory with Christ,

Chriſt, that we ſhould firſt ſuffer with him. And this he ſeems to ſpeak of outward ſufferings, ſuch as Chriſtians and he himſelf ſuffered by oppoſition from the world; and ſeems to imply that theſe, at leaſt at that time, were unavoidable, and the neceſſary condition of happineſs and glory. And he might very well ſay this, having found and ſeen it ſo in others; and eſpecially becauſe his maſter himſelf had ſaid that his ſervants muſt not expect to be better uſed than he had been; and that, if they had called him, the maſter himſelf, by the moſt odious names, his ſervants could not expect to be better uſed; and in general, ſince he had always ſaid that thoſe, who would follow him, muſt follow him with their croſs, and bearing it after him. And this was ſtill the more plain, becauſe, when he ſpoke of the great bleſſings and advantages of his profeſſion, he even then took care, in the midſt of thoſe, to mention the greateſt ſufferings to be expected with the ſame certainty. "There is no "man," ſaith St. Mark, "that hath left houſe, DISC. XXX.

"or

DISC. XXX.

"or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, "or wife, or children, or lands, for my ſake or "the goſpel's, but he ſhall receive an hundred "fold in this time; houſes, and brethren, and "ſiſters, and mother, and children, and lands, "with perſecutions." That theſe great promiſes and bleſſings in this preſent time were made good we ſhall ſee, if we obſerve and conſider ſufficiently the happineſs of Chriſtians at that time, even in the midſt of their ſufferings; and that they really had literally, or in ſome ſenſe, all that any of them had given up before; houſes and lands, and the kindeſt and neareſt friendſhip and relation. They had all this really, by the community and affection that was among them. But we ſee how carefully, in the midſt of theſe things, the ſufferings ſtill to be expected are thrown in. It is no wonder, therefore, that this Apoſtle, St. Paul, who always agrees ſo exactly with the mind or ſenſe of Chriſt, ſhould ſpeak of ſufferings, and probably thoſe by perſecution, as unavoidable, and as a requiſite condition

dition of happineſs and glory: and yet, after all, it is but a ſtrong pathetic way of ſpeaking, though true and juſt, according to the real nature of ſuch ſubjects, in which abſolute certainty is not required but general truth. In this manner, without doubt, it was true, that there was no way of entering into the kingdom of God, as he ſays in another place, without afflictions. But is this ſo now equally and in the ſame ſenſe? It is certain, that the ſcripture itſelf is our only rule, by which we can judge of its own things; that we are not at liberty to alter this, or to make it more eaſy or leſs diſagreeable to ourſelves. And in many reſpects generally it will be found, that the truth of ſcripture is more literal and exact than we are aware. But however in this caſe and in ſome others, in which the doctrine itſelf is not concerned, but the effects of it, and the conſequences with men; if by the condition of things in the world, the goſpel with its profeſſion and practice at one time be certain to find the ſtrongeſt oppoſition and enmity

DISC. XXX.

DISC. XXX. mity from men, and is not ſo now equally and in the ſame ſenſe, there can be no harm, but it will be our duty, to explain the ſcripture in ſuch a manner as will be agreeable to plain and evident things.

For, as it is at preſent, the name of Chriſt and his goſpel is generally received and eſtabliſhed among men; and though it is with ſo much difference, that, in ſome countries, ſome real and fundamental both doctrines and practices of the goſpel may be oppoſed with violence and cruelty, yet this cannot be publicly, or in general, where the ſcripture is allowed to be the beſt and ſafeſt rule; for then, even the errors of men, which have nothing in them that is wicked or hurtful, muſt be borne with: therefore, in ſuch countries there can be no public or general perſecution upon account of any profeſſion or practice of the goſpel: and this is plainly our caſe at preſent in this country. Whatever hardſhips, therefore, may happen in particular

cular cases, it is certain that now there is no such general enmity or persecution of the gospel, as was in the first times, before it was generally received or acknowledged in the world: so that it cannot be true, that the same degree of outward sufferings is generally to be expected now; that they are now, as much as they were then, the unavoidable lot of Christians; or that without these we cannot be real partakers with Christ or enter into his kingdom. The powers of this world are become the friends and protectors of the gospel. Therefore those sufferings, which arise from persecution and from enmity, are not so much to be expected as they were in the first times; and though, in particular cases, there may often be great disadvantages found, as well as great benefits, from a consistent and remarkable profession of true religion, yet this is but little more than may happen from any other difference of judgment and inclination among men. We may, therefore, now begin to think, that, the practice of the gospel being safe, and DISC. XXX.

DISC. XXX.

protected, at leaſt from public injuries, and being left to its own nature, and to thoſe which are its own effects, will be attended with nothing but ſuch ſatisfaction, and pleaſure, and peace, as are moſt naturally to be expected from it. If there are any diſadvantages or hardſhips, that are inſeparable from it, they are ſuch as ariſe properly from ourſelves; from ſuch oppoſition as we ourſelves make to the conditions which it requires of us. For it is not to be ſuppoſed that the great benefits and ſatisfaction of religion are ſuch as can be had with every other pleaſure or advantage at the ſame time; or that we are to loſe and give up nothing for it: ſo that in this manner there will ſtill be ſome diſadvantages or hardſhips and ſufferings. And, as our Saviour thought it proper to ſpeak ſo much and ſo plainly of the great afflictions that would attend his religion, not only that the vain and worldly might not be miſtaken, but that his own diſciples ſhould be leſs diſcouraged with what they found; ſo, for the ſame reaſons, it is very proper that we

we ſhould now underſtand whatever difficulties or diſadvantages there are, and which are ſtill to be expected: which, therefore, I ſhall ſhew at preſent; it being proper that we ſhould know and expect them, ſuppoſing at this time, what it will be eaſy to ſhew, that they are really not worthy to be compared with the great advantages and bleſſings in other reſpects which belong to it. DISC. XXX.

And, firſt, we muſt remember, that in general our Saviour has choſen to repreſent his religion in a very ſevere and ſtrict manner: not becauſe it is not gracious and kind and good, and moſt agreeable to whatever is good in our nature; but becauſe to repreſent it in this manner was really beſt for men, that they may not be the more diſcouraged by being deceived; and becauſe it is really true, that it has a very ſtrict and ſevere part as well as a gracious and agreeable one.

DISC. XXX.

The reaſon of this is, that the nature of man is ſo far from being right and good, without correction and amendment, that the beſt things cannot but be diſagreeable to ourſelves in the practice, however juſt and ſatisfactory they are to our reaſon and underſtanding. Thus to love God with all our heart and with all our mind and ſtrength, to love him above ourſelves, is plainly the moſt juſt and reaſonable thing in the world; and yet it is moſt diſagreeable to our nature in the practice. For the conſequence of this is, that we muſt regard him in every thing; and that we muſt have no affection or concern for any thing, but as he commands or allows. To turn our affections to him, who is the author and giver of every thing, and who is the true object of all love and honour, this is the true converſion and true repentance; and it muſt needs be accompanied with ſorrow, and pain and ſhame; becauſe it muſt be plain to every one of himſelf, that he has not always had ſo much as the thought or purpoſe of this duty, and that he has

has never, at any time, discharged this as to our reason it ought to be: so that here is a ground for the same repentance and sorrow and amendment, as long as we find that our regard and concern return to ourselves. Therefore that to love God and to serve him, which is to regard him more than ourselves, cannot be but by such severe practice and such self-denial, as our Saviour has required of us, which must be difficult and grievous in some respects, however it may tend absolutely to our greatest contentment, joy, and satisfaction even in this life. The same may justly be said of the other great duty, which our Saviour has named, as the second and next; that we should love our neighbour, not more but equally with, as ourselves. That the reason of this is plain, because we are of the same nature, and because every man is recommended to us equally by him who made us, as we are to ourselves. But the practice, as every one may too easily perceive, is difficult. There is no danger of any thing wrong from this precept being un-

DISC. XXX.

DISC. XXX.

derſtood too ſtrictly: for there are evident reaſons, why, in many reſpects, we ſhould take more care of ourſelves, or of thoſe who are near to us, than of others: it is more in our power to do ourſelves the greateſt good, by reforming and governing ourſelves, than it is to do the ſame to others: for which reaſon it is more our duty. And in other reſpects it is more in our power to take care of our juſt intereſt, and of thoſe who are near to us, than it is to take care of others, which is their buſineſs to do. And beſides this, the inequalities and diſtinctions, that are in the world, are allowed by religion itſelf; and, therefore, may juſtly, and with duty, be preſerved: but, when theſe exceptions are made, the command is perfectly reaſonable and juſt, that we ſhould be concerned and affected for another man, as for our brother or ourſelves. We cannot but ſee and acknowledge this to be juſt: and yet how difficult is it to perform this, though reaſonable, and though the beſt happineſs as well as goodneſs depends upon it! In how many

many things muſt we deny ourſelves, to get an habit continually of doing this, in order to be kind, compaſſionate, or good to others? There is no living with men, but by complying with them, and by giving up our own wills and deſires upon many occaſions. To do this in *ſmaller* thing is ſo neceſſary, that it is done often, becauſe it is neceſſary. But it might be done, and it ought to be, from true goodneſs and compaſſion: and, where this is, it will oblige us on ſome occaſions to make greater ſacrifices, or to give up more of our own pleaſure, intereſt and eaſe. As we are obliged in every thing to regard God, ſo we are obliged always to do good to men; or to do our duty carefully in that way of life in which we are, by which we do good. Now there is, you ſee, a real difficulty, and it ought not to be thought too eaſy, even though they are duties the moſt juſt and reaſonable; and though, in the end, they really tend to our trueſt eaſe, ſatisfaction and happineſs in this life. We have DISC. XXX.

DISC. XXX.

no reaſon to forget, at the ſame time, that other hope, which God in infinite goodneſs has ſet before us. But it ought not to be looked upon as a *reward*; for we neither do, nor ſuffer any thing, that can deſerve it: but it ſhould be received as the gift of God and his infinite grace and loving kindneſs to men. And, if we can think that our duty itſelf is ſome ſatisfaction for any difficulties that we generally meet with, then the hope of a future happineſs, which is ſtill greater than any happineſs of this life, will ſtill have the greater effect with us: for this is that great conſideration, which, in all caſes, in any greater difficulties, or when we do not find the ſatisfaction of goodneſs itſelf, will make religion ſtill deſirable to us: for which reaſon it is ſet before us ſo much in the ſcriptures, and is never to be forgotten.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXXI.

THE BLESSING AND REWARD OF KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS.

REVELATION XXII. 14.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.

THE books of ſcripture having ſet before men, in the cleareſt light, the commandments of God, as the rule of their duty, and the happineſs he promiſed them, as the reward of their obedience, are, at the concluſion of the whole, cloſed up with the ſhort and majeſtic, as well as affectionate, exclamation, "Bleſſed are they "that DISC. XXXI.

DISC. XXXI. "that do his commandments, that they may "have right to the tree of life."

The word *blessed* is, in this place, particularly emphatical; becauſe it is the reſult or concluſion of a large and diſtinct deſcription of the happineſs of heaven, under the ſimilitude of "a city, whoſe ſtreets were pure gold, and her "walls and buildings of precious ſtones; in "which the tabernacle of God ſhall be fixed "among men, and he ſhall dwell with them, "and they ſhall be his people, and he ſhall be "their God; and they ſhall ſee his face, and his "name ſhall be in their foreheads:" particularly, by "the tree of life being there; which "yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves "thereof were for the healing of the nations." After this large and diſtinct deſcription of the happineſs of heaven, under ſuch figures and ſimilitudes as ſet forth to us in much ſtronger terms the greatneſs of that happineſs than any literal expreſſions could do; after this, I ſay, it is with

with the greateſt emphaſis, and in the moſt mov- DISC. XXXI.
ing and pathetical manner, that the reſult of the whole is, as it were, by way of inference or application, ſummed up in the words of the text: "Bleſſed are they that do his commandments, "that they may have right to the tree of life; "and may enter in through the gates into the "city."

The tree of life was the ancient and original emblem of immortality. "Out of the ground "made the Lord God to grow every tree that "is pleaſant to the ſight, and good for food; "the tree of life alſo in the midſt of the gar- "den." The meaning is, God furniſhed our firſt parents in Paradiſe with every thing that was needful to complete their happineſs. And as the principal part of all he put them in a poſſibility of obtaining immortality without paſſing through death at all. Adam does not ſeem to have been created *actually* immortal: but he was created with a poſſibility of eſcaping death,

and

and of becoming immortal without ever dying. The means by which flesh and blood was to have been preserved from mortality, to which it could not but be by nature subject, was the use of the tree of life. This appears, Gen. iii. 22; "And "now, lest the man put forth his hand, and "take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live "for ever; therefore, the Lord God sent him "forth from the garden of Eden." The expression, "lest the man put forth his hand, and "take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for "ever," argues, that man was not created *naturally* immortal; but that, by the use of the tree of life (whatever is implied under the expression) he was to have been preserved from dying. By sin our first parent forfeited this high privilege; being, from henceforth, justly excluded out of the paradise of God, and put out of the reach of the tree of life. That is, he was, by the righteous sentence of God, left subject to the mortality, which, in the course of nature, must necessarily and unavoidably come upon

upon him and his poſterity, when they were no longer ſuffered to have recourſe to the miraculous means of being preſerved from death. And this is the meaning of the figurative expreſſion, "The Lord God placed cherubims and a flaming ſword, to keep the way of the tree of life:" man, being excluded out of Paradiſe, had no longer any poſſibility of eſcaping the death, to which the natural mortality, in which he was created, made him neceſſarily ſubject. DISC. XXXI.

But, though from henceforth there was no more poſſibility of eſcaping death, it being irreverſibly "appointed for all men once to die;" yet, through the redemption purchaſed for us by Chriſt, we are now reſtored to a poſſibility of obtaining that immortality after death, which our firſt parent had it in his power to have obtained without dying. And the bringing again of life and immortality to light through the goſpel is, in the New Teſtament, elegantly ſet forth by the ſame ancient emblem, the tree of life. Rev. ii. 7.

"He

DISC. XXXI. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what "the ſpirit ſaith unto the churches; to him, that "overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of "life, which is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of "God. In the midſt of the ſtreet was the tree "of life, which yielded her fruit every month; "and the leaves of the tree were for the healing "of the nations." And again, in the words of the text, at the concluſion of the whole book, "Bleſſed are they that do his command-"ments, that they may have right to the tree "of life."

Now theſe words of the text are emphatically expreſſive of the righteouſneſs, or virtuous practice, which is the eſſence and the end of true religion: according to that of St. John; "Little chil-"dren, let no man deceive you: he, that doeth "righteouſneſs, is righteous: and of St. Paul; "Not the hearers of the law are juſt before "God, but the doers of the law ſhall be juſti-"fied." This doctrinal obſervation follows; that

that whatever elſe, beſides keeping the commandments of God, in the courſe of a virtuous and good life, according to the rules delivered in the goſpel, goes among vain men under the name and character of religion, and is weakly and ſuperſtitiouſly valued or eſteemed as ſuch, is all of it error and deceit. Let no man deceive us with vain words: for "bleſſed are "they only, who *do* his commandments, that "they may have right to the tree of life." DISC. XXXI.

The errors, contrary to this great and fundamental truth, and which conſequently ſubvert the whole deſign of Chriſtianity, are ſuch as theſe following:

1ſt. Some have imagined themſelves entitled to the rewards of the goſpel merely upon account of their profeſſing themſelves Chriſtians, and of their obſerving certain outward forms, rites, and ceremonies, by which they think Chriſtians diſtinguiſh themſelves from thoſe of other

other denominations. Juſt as the Jews of old eſteemed themſelves the peculiar people and favourites of God, merely on account of their being deſcended from the patriarch Abraham, and diſtinguiſhed as ſuch by circumciſion. But in like manner as St. Paul argued againſt ſuch fooliſh Jews, "That they were not all Iſrael, "who were of Iſrael; neither, becauſe they "were the ſeed of Abraham, were they all chil-"dren; for yet they which are the children of "the fleſh, theſe are not the children of God; "but the children of the promiſe are counted "for the ſeed: and that Abraham was the father, "not to them of the circumciſion only, but to "them alſo that walk in the ſteps of the faith "of our father Abraham; and that he is not a "Jew which is one outwardly, but he which "is one inwardly; and that circumciſion is of "the heart, in the ſpirit and not in the let-"ter;" ſo our Saviour, in the very ſame manner, and with the ſame plainneſs and earneſtneſs, argues againſt ſuch Chriſtians as valued themſelves

ſelves merely upon their profeſſion, "Not every "one, that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter "into the kingdom of heaven; but he that "doeth the will of my father which is in hea-"ven." Vain men, who have no true ſenſe of virtue and real goodneſs, are apt to imagine, that profeſſing themſelves Chriſtians, and being diligent, perhaps, in certain external forms and ceremonies of religion, is being in Chriſt, being members of his body, and received (as it were) into the ark of Chriſt's church. But the ſcripture, on the contrary, expreſsly declares, that "no man is in Chriſt, (whatever his profeſſion be, and whatever his zeal for any outward performances may be) "if he is not a new crea-"ture;" if he is not effectually reformed in his life and manners; and that, "except a man be "born of the ſpirit, as well as of water, he can-"not enter into the kingdom of God." "Bleſ-"ſed, therefore, are they," (not, who profeſs his religion, but) "who do his commandments; "that they may have right to the tree of life." DISC. XXXI.

DISC. XXXI.

2dly. Others there are, who have esteemed and valued themselves upon a fanciful and enthusiastic knowledge of Christ: as if by certain unaccountable fond notions, and expressions of imaginary love towards him, they could obtain his personal favour and affection. This groundless conceit the Apostle St. John cuts up by the roots. "Hereby," says he, (by this one way only, in opposition to all enthusiastic imaginations whatsoever; hereby only) "do we know that we "know him, if we keep his commandments! "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not "his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is "not in him: but, whoso keepeth his word, "in him verily is the love of God perfected." Were any other knowledge or love of Christ, besides this one which expresses itself in doing his commandments;—were, I say, any other knowledge or love of Christ, of any use or value; most reasonably might it have been expected to have been of advantage to those, who personally conversed with him here upon earth, and saw his glory,

glory, and heard the gracious words of his mouth. Yet concerning ſome of theſe, who heard him, it ſeems, but did not do what he ſaid, but valued themſelves however, upon the perſonal familiarity with him, we find him declaring, "then ſhall "ye begin to ſay, we have eaten and drunk in "thy preſence, and thou haſt taught in our "ſtreets. But he ſhall ſay, I tell you, I know "you not whence you are: depart from me, all "ye workers of iniquity." Nay, even with regard to his own diſciples, who ſo ſaw and heard him, as to believe and obey his word, and to whom he had himſelf declared, "Bleſſed are "your eyes, for they ſee; and your ears, for they "hear: for verily I ſay unto you, that many "prophets and righteous men have deſired to "ſee thoſe things which ye ſee, and have not "ſeen them; and to hear thoſe things which ye "hear, and have not heard them:"—even with regard to theſe very diſciples, that this bleſſedneſs of theirs might not be placed upon a miſtaken ground, he ſays, "*blessed:*" (*i. e.* more bleſſed,) are they that have not ſeen and yet have believed: DISC. XXXI.

DISC. XXXI.

nay, ſtill farther, "when one ſaid unto him, Be-
"hold, thy mother and thy brethren ſtand with-
"out, deſiring to ſpeak with thee; he anſwered,
"Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?
"And, ſtretching forth his hands towards his diſ-
"ciples, he ſaid, Behold my mother and my bre-
"thren! for whoſoever ſhall do the will of my fa-
"ther which is in heaven, the ſame is my brother,
"and ſiſter, and mother." And, when a woman among the multitude, admiring his wiſdom and goodneſs, "lift up her voice, and ſaid, Bleſſed
"is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which
"thou haſt ſucked," immediately he replied,
"Yea, rather bleſſed are they that hear the word
"of God, and keep it." They, of the church of Rome, who are ſo apt to place I know not what imaginary virtue, in the blood, and relics and bones of dead ſaints, would do well to conſider, how little virtue our Saviour here declares there was in having borne the neareſt relation even to his own living body. And they, who flatter themſelves with the great benefits they hope

hope to reap by paying forbidden honour and will-worſhip to the bleſſed virgin, ſhould obſerve how our Lord, as it were, on purpoſe to prevent all ſuperſtition of the kind, ſeems, in the paſſage now before us, to diminiſh expreſsly that which is the whole foundation of the honour they would deſire to pay her: he ſeems, I ſay, expreſsly to diminiſh the value even of the relation ſhe ſtood in to himſelf. Relation, comparatively ſpeaking, he would allow no one to bear to him, any otherwiſe than as they were, with him, obſervers of his father's commandments. This was the great bond of unity and affection; and in it all other affinity was entirely ſwallowed up. "Henceforth," ſays St. Paul, "know we no "man after the fleſh: yea, though we have "known Chriſt after the fleſh, yet now hence- "forth know we him no more. There is now, "neither Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor un- "circumciſion, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor "free; but Chriſt," (*i. e.* obedience to the goſpel of Chriſt) "is all, and in all." And in DISC. XXXI.

DISC. XXXI.

Christ "circumcision is nothing and uncircum-
"cision is nothing, but the keeping the com-
"mandments of God." And to the same purpose it is, that our Lord tells his disciples, "I tell you "the truth; it is expedient for you that I go "away: for, if I depart, I will send the com-"forter unto you." His meaning is, that the spiritual gifts and graces, wrought in men by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness and sincere obedience, bring men nearer to Christ, and unite them to him in a truer and more strict alliance, than even conversing with himself personally upon earth according to the flesh. "Blessed, therefore, are "they (not who fancy they converse with Christ by enthusiastic imaginations, but) "who do his "commandments, that they may have right to "the tree of life."

3dly. And to conclude. There is yet another sort who have imagined, that, by laying hold on Christ with a strong and confident faith, they might

might ſecure to themſelves the ſalvation which he has purchaſed for his followers. But, though very great things are indeed ſpoken in ſcripture concerning faith, as that by which we are ſaved, yet theſe perſons do not conſider, that all the commendations, there given to faith, are conſtantly of the ſame kind with that given to a root or tree which beareth excellent fruit. The root or tree is excellent, becauſe it brings forth good fruit, and becauſe the fruit cannot be brought forth without it: but it is valuable for no other reaſon, but for bringing forth ſuch fruit; and, when ever it fails of ſo doing, it is of no value at all. Moſt properly and juſtly, therefore, does our Saviour direct us to judge of a tree by its fruits: and bleſſed does the text pronounce, not them, who fancy they have a ſtrong faith in him, but them, "who do his commandments, "that they may have right to the tree of life."

DISC. XXXI.

might secure to themselves the salvation which Jesus has purchased for his followers. That, though very great things are indeed spoken in Scripture concerning faith, as that by which we are saved, yet those persons do not consider, that all the commendations there given to faith, are connected only of the same kind with that given to a root or tree which beareth excellent fruit. The root or tree is excellent, because it brings forth good fruit, and because the fruit cannot be brought forth without it: but it is valuable for no other reason, but for bringing forth such fruit; and, when ever it fails of so doing, it is of no value at all. Most properly and justly, therefore, doth our Saviour direct us to judge of a tree by its fruits: and likewise does the text pronounce, not them, who fancy they have a strong faith in him, but them, "who do his commandments, "that they may have right to the tree of life."

LETTERS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE

REV. CHRISTOPHER WELLS,* B. D.

* See ſome account of the Author, prefixed to the Firſt Volume of the Diſcourſes, *p.* 3.

LETTER I.

Oxford, November 21ſt, 1755.

Dear Sir,

WHEN you aſk my opinion I give it without any ſcruple, and with great pleaſure, becauſe I deſign to oblige you. LETT. I.

It is a juſt notion of *Homer*, that his poems are a repreſentation of the moſt ſtriking things in nature, and of all human ſentiments and actions almoſt, that are beautiful or conſiderable, particularly to the people to whom he wrote. In this view it muſt be moſt inſtructive to ſee the religion of that time painted exactly as it was, only with the graces of poetry added, with all the characters of the age, their paſſions, their

ſentiments,

LETT. I. ſentiments, and manners. That he intended to make his plan as large as poſſible, and that he did not intend to make the Wrath of Achilles or the Trojan War his only ſubjects is plain, when we ſee him take every opportunity to enlarge and diverſify, bringing in continually actions and ſentiments of men or of gods, or deſcriptions of natural things, that are not neceſſary to his deſign, in any confined ſenſe, but have ſo much dependence on or connection with it, as makes them proper. From his firſt beginning he gives himſelf liberty.

But you do not want any recommendation of *Homer* at preſent: what I would endeavour to ſhew, if I could, is, in what manner he is uſeful to real ſenſe and knowledge; which he certainly is; not by adviſing or preſcribing always what is right, but by ſhewing men and things as they are or were, and affording ſo much matter of reflection.

Another

Another good effect that may ariſe from him is ſome *good humour*, or improvement of the temper, by the charms of the poetry itſelf, and the ſpirit as well as the harmony of the verſe, which may be expected to have, in ſome degree, the ſame good effect *that muſic has.* I ſhall be glad to ſpeak of theſe things more fully another time; profeſſing myſelf to have no deſign of reading any thing, *which cannot contribute ſomething to real happiness, and ſome moral improvement: and good humour, I am ſatisfied, is the proper ground for both:* and this, I think, is a proper effect of good poetry; though I do not ſufficiently ſhew *how* it is: you muſt obſerve and conſider it yourſelf. LETT. I.

You aſk me about *Ariſtotle.* As you have read ſomething of him, I do not know whether you had not better make one trial of another, who, in ſome reſpects, is more improving; or, as he is more agreeable and more affecting, ought, for that reaſon, to be read firſt. I do not remember

LETT. I. ber whether you have read any thing in *Plato*: if you have not, I think you will receive great pleaſure and ſatisfaction in his *Phædo*: for that dialogue, as it is a moſt celebrated thing, and upon the moſt ſtriking and intereſting ſubject, the Immortalityof the Soul, ſo it ſeems to be as highly wrought as any; it ſeems to contain the ſpirit and the uſe of all his higheſt philoſophy, with the beſt and nobleſt morals, *and the most like Christianity:* and all this in the moſt agreeable manner; ſo that this alone, I am ſatisfied, would be a great pleaſure to you. The beſt edition, I think, is that by *Forster*, an octavo book; where this, which I recommend to you now, is the laſt in the book. This itſelf, I think, will be a fine employment for you. It is really improving, and is not, perhaps, the leſs proper to be read at this time, *if a very contrary philosophy is not quite forgotten, as it deserves to be.* If you read this, when you can give moſt attention, and Homer, when you want ſomething eaſier, I ſuppoſe they will,

for

for ſome time, give you full employment of this ſort. LETT. I.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and real humble Servant,

CHR. W.

LETTER

LETTER II.

Remenham, January 7th, 1756.

Dear Sir,

LETT. II. WHAT you ſay in your letter is really ſo proper and ſo full to your purpoſe, that I do not know that I could add any thing; but I ought to write to acknowledge it. The argument from *eſſences*, of which you ſpeak, is obſcure; and I muſt ſpeak of it from memory only. I think it comes to this, or is the ſame with this great maxim, (if it is one, as I think it is) that no *real thing ever perishes*, or can be *changed* into another oppoſite or different; which ſeems to be more impoſſible than the other; and, I think, is ſo repreſented in the argument: but all that periſhes,

periſhes, or is changed, is only *accidents*, or outward relations of things. If this is a principle, becauſe you deſire my opinion, then I think the argument is good, that mind, and thought, and life, the moſt real of all things (for every thing elſe may be an appearance, but thought itſelf is real) it is certain, I think, upon this principle, that thought cannot periſh, or ever be deſtroyed; but there muſt for ever be a *mind* in which it reſides, and not in pieces, and in ſucceſſion, as it is with us, but altogether or complete and perfect in every inſtance. It muſt have a *principle*, from whence it comes, and whither it goes, and cannot be really loſt, if it is loſt to us. It muſt be an *eternal* thing. This, I think, is what the argument proves; which is well worth the proving: but it is what cannot belong to us: but we muſt be ſatisfied, and can hope only to have our being dependent upon that ALMIGHTY AND ALL-PERFECT ONE. We cannot have, nor ought, I think, to deſire, any other aſſurance than that of his will, however LETT. II.

LETT. II. known, whether by moral arguments, (of which these are very strong) or his own declaration. In this I know you will agree; and yet those other arguments, from the nature of our minds, are not useless, but have force, so far as they make it probable, or give a presumption, that what is of a high nature, and most real and fitted, according to its nature, for duration, is intended to endure by him upon whom it depends.

I shall be glad, at all times, to know your opinion upon these subjects, which I see you are not in danger of valuing over much: but it is the *morals*, as you say, and the *divinity*, (at least according to my opinion) not what concerns our future existence, that is most valuable in that which you have been reading: as it distinguishes the nature of mind from matter and body, it is most valuable as you say, both as a philosophy, and a philosophy that connects with morals. It raises no objections, but opens the way to the belief of whatever may be revealed from God himself,

himſelf, that is kind or comfortable to us beyond expectation. LETT. II.

I ſhall be glad to know what alteration in your meaſures and preſent way of life that muſt make which you tell me of. I think it does at once bring you into buſineſs; which I do not doubt but you will diſcharge well. *There certainly can be but one purpose of life; which is to please that one great Being, who has a right to every thing.*

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate Friend,

C. W.

LETTER III.

Oxford, July 12th, 1756.

Dear Sir,

LETT. III. I Was indeed very glad to hear from you, and ſhould be ſorry if I have given you any reaſon to make apologies to me in any thing that you would have a right to aſk of an acquaintance and a friend. I cannot ſay any thing more, in defence of your purpoſe to ſtudy and to enquire into ſomething beyond your profeſſion itſelf, than you have ſaid. It is really right to improve our judgment in thoſe other things which you mention; which are really *religion and morality*, or tend to theſe; which are indeed our *firſt* profeſſion and obligation, and have a neceſſary influence

fluence on every other; and though this part with ſome is ſoon ſatisfied, and perhaps, well and ſufficiently, with others it is not ſo eaſy, who either have obſerved what different opinions there are upon theſe ſubjects, which it is neceſſary for them to ſettle; or who naturally have large notions of theſe things, which it is neceſſary for them to complete. The deſire itſelf, when it is ſtrong, is a ſure ſign that they ought to go on farther. I do really, therefore, myſelf think that you are very right in your deſign to read and ſtudy thoſe large and general ſubjects which you think of; nor do I think it need hinder you at all in the ſtudy of your profeſſion; ſince it will really require no more and no other time, than would be thought leiſure, and which you yourſelf would employ in other amuſements if you had not theſe, *which are amuſement and buſineſs both together.* LETT. III.

I ſhall be very glad at all times to know (and the more freely the better) how you go on,

LETT. III. and in what manner; and poſſibly I may be able in ſome things to ſhew you a ſhorter way which may ſave you ſome trouble; (which it is not poſſible to know without ſome direction) and it is only in want of better that I offer you mine. Particularly, what part of *Ariſtotle* do you read, or intend to read? In reading *Homer*, I think it is of great uſe to be aware that he writes as ſimply and familiarly as he poſſibly could, ſo as to avoid meanneſs. He is very ſeldom what is called *ſublime*; or, if he is ſo at any time, he knows what he does, and is *never tranſported*, but only *pretends* to be ſo. In this view, I believe he would appear more inſtructive as well as more agreeable.

The Treatiſe of Lord *Shafteſbury*, of which you aſk my opinion, is really, in ſome meaſure, a *rhapſody*, becauſe he choſe, I believe, to fill it with a great many agreeable and uſeful things, rather than require too long an attention to any one. I believe he owns ſomething like this in his

his own criticism upon it in the third volume, which I have not now by me. *Palemon's Lamentation* of so much misery and disorder among men lays a very proper foundation for the inquiry concerning some remedy of all this. The dialogue afterwards, between *Theocles and Philocles*, concerning happiness, leads to this purpose, as it settles that happiness must arise from right and good affections, but that there is not in any particulars, nor in any, but ONE COMPLETE AND UNIVERSAL BEING, a perfect or sufficient object of such affection; and such Being, for this purpose it is seemingly required, should be sensible or conceivable by the imagination, at the same time that it is general and universal. This you see in the latter end of the first section, part the second. After this he goes off till quite the third part, to remove hindrances from wrong opinions concerning *virtue*, as that it is not in itself the proper means of happiness; which gives him an opportunity of clearing and defending his former Treatise concerningvirtue. This de- LETT. III.

LETT. III.

fence in form begins in page 264, of the firſt edition, in octavo, and ſeems to be extremely well written. But I ſaid wrong, that the ſubject is deferred ſo far as to part the third. There comes on, after this, in ſection the fourth of part the ſecond, a walk in the fields; in which the great union of things is ſpoken of as the beſt ſolution of any particular difficulties, and a proof of an *univerſal mind*; which, however, occaſions the objections of *Philocles* to the human part being too much neglected in this great ſyſtem; which objections he thought conſiderable enough to be removed: and, after this, at night, the converſation falls upon ſpectres and ghaſtly or ſtrange things and miracles; for the ſame reaſon, I ſuppoſe, becauſe there is a ſpecies of religion very different from this, which reſults from order and beauty; and in this view, perhaps, was proper to be removed. If theſe are proper parts, they are certainly well done. In the third part comes his grand ſubject, to prove and to ſhew that great *genius, or univerſal mind*, which

which is to be the complete and perfect object of all our affections. But, as he ſpeaks of this, I am not ſure I underſtand what he means; and, if I underſtand him, I do not underſtand his proof. He means, I ſuppoſe, *the Deity with nature under it.* But the Deity itſelf ſeems to be his *universal mind*; which he endeavours to prove not only to be the author and governor of the univerſal ſyſtem, but to be united to it, as in thoſe lines which he quotes from Virgil, "the "active mind, &c." His reaſon, for this, I ſuppoſe, is that, in this view, he would be more ſenſible to us, or be more the object of affection, as being not only preſent in every part of the world, but concerned for it and with it. But this proof of his I cannot ſee to be ſufficient. He ſays "that, if the world or univerſe is properly one thing, (*p.* 347) it muſt have ſomething "belonging to it, that makes it one." In the ſame manner as a tree is one, or an animal one, by having parts *vitally* united. Now this is true of an animal, and, I think, of a tree or plant, that LETT. III.

LETT. III.

that it is one, not only by having parts that agree together (as the parts of a houſe or ſtatue) by one deſign; but that, being natural things, they have a ſomething beſides which unites them. But it does not follow (to me) that this is ſo of the univerſe, or that, becauſe it is one ſyſtem, it muſt be animated: ſince it might be one really and ſufficiently in the other ſenſe, as a building is, or a dead piece of work; which proves an author that could deſign ſo perfect a ſyſtem, and not that he is united to it. It is, perhaps true, that there is a life all through, but it does not follow from his argument, or becauſe the univerſe is one; ſince it might be one only in the other ſenſe: and, if it is ſo, it ſhould ſeem rather to be nature, or ſome ſubordinate being, that animates every thing, and not the Deity himſelf. For it would be ſufficient (as far as appears to me) for every purpoſe, that the univerſe is one ſyſtem, with perfect agreement of parts; created, as it muſt be, by an infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, and preſerved by his overruling

ruling power, and by ſome ſubordinate life beſides, that moves and acts according to his rules. And for the main purpoſe that every thing may be good at laſt, or all real ill excluded, it will be as well, if there is a perfect Being concerned for the world, as if he is concerned with it; which he ſeems to ſay, but which ſeems to be too much, or, at leaſt, need not be, ſince the other is ſufficient. It is all ſafe and well, if there is a Deity concerned for the world by his goodneſs, and not by an intereſt, which he ſeems to ſay. "For every nature, he ſays, acts for itſelf, "and labours to the utmoſt to prevent ill or to "remove it: and ſhall not the nature of the "whole do as much?" This is in page 360. And by the nature of the whole, I think, he muſt mean in this place the *univerſal mind or genius.* You ſee I diſagree with him only in what is not neceſſary, in my opinion, to his purpoſe: for all ill will be as well excluded, if the world is one great ſyſtem of things; which muſt have one infinite and perfect mind its author and preſerver, who

LETT. III.

LETT. III.

who can have no defect or imperfection; and for this reaſon, becauſe he can have no intereſt of his own, he muſt invariably deſign the greateſt good and intereſt of all. And ſuch a Being will be a perfect object of love, and of all affection and duty, ſufficiently manifeſt and viſible in his works, conſidered as his works; and, if we want more, we find it in *Chriſtianity*, in which the ſame great Being, who made the world (but who has a Father which himſelf declared to us) is united really to human nature, and is concerned not only for us but with us: at leaſt he repreſents himſelf ſo. This, I believe, is a perfect object of affection in all reſpects, and anſwers to his idea of a genius or an univerſal mind concerned for us in the moſt ſenſible manner. At leaſt it is no wonder if we can reap ſuch good as this from his notion: for the errors of ſuch men often are of uſe; for they aim at ſomething that is deſirable. But I do not know whether the beſt part of all this Treatiſe is not the concluſion; when he confirms and ſtrengthens, after having convinced, as he

he ſuppoſes; which begin with "Have courage!" LTET. III.
Philocles; p. 417, where he ſhews that all men in ſome meaſure agree in the foundation of virtue; and the laſt ſection of the whole, where he ſhews, that ſince, in the purpoſe of life, men are ſo various in their opinions, we may very well be at liberty to follow our own. Theſe things are written with great ſpirit and clearneſs.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and real humble Servant,

CHR. W.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

April 23d, 1758.

Dear Sir,

LETT. IV. I Have read the two poems you have been ſo kind to ſend me; and I own I like the King of Pr—'s, at leaſt the Prayer or Invocation, with the laſt verſe,—

Au prés de ton trone ſacré,
Je baiſſe ma tête trés bas;

which is very noble humiliation to the only Being that is great. I write it in French, becauſe I think that it is better than in the tranſlation, and more poetical, I ſuppoſe; being more particular

ticular and more expreſſed. Then again, when he ſays, *purſue!* I imagine that is good and like poetry. In the other, it is natural for me to think there is a great deal of right ſenſe and reaſon: and his notion, that to train a people to arms would be the very beſt means to make them better ſubjects and leſs riotous, is, I think, as likely to be true, as he explains it. But the whole I imagine to be rather reaſoning and oratory, than poetry; for it is too long, and has nothing, I think, that is remarkably ſtriking. But, as you make me the great compliment, to aſk me what is poetry; (for ſo it is to aſk any one, what any thing is; and this thing, perhaps, is of a particular nature, very difficult to be underſtood, though it is what every one feels more or leſs) I really cannot pretend to anſwer you, though I own I have conſidered it ſometimes as a ſtriking thing, and as the inquiry is agreeable and amuſing. But, though the effects are plain and ſtrong, the cauſe is ſubtile, and I can make nothing of it, and beg to be excuſed. I ſhould think it very LETT. IV.

well

LETT. IV. well if I could diſtinguiſh ſometimes good from bad; which is a faculty that may be gained, in ſome meaſure, when there is any natural diſpoſition, by reading that which is generally allowed to be good, and which, I ſuppoſe, muſt be ſo. From ſuch writing we may have ſufficient amuſement, and, I imagine, the beſt and livelieſt inſtruction; for then, I think, right ſenſe and truth is poetical, when it is expreſſed in the very beſt manner; which will be when the expreſſion is moſt clear. But in this there is a happineſs that I do not underſtand, and when beſides every thing is affecting, as much as poſſible; for which reaſon meaſure and harmony are added, and which I believe are neceſſary to make it perfect, though this is not the moſt material part. But I really am tired with what I ſay to you, and muſt have done for that reaſon.

I ſay nothing of Ariſtotle's Republic, for the ſame reaſon that I ought to have ſaid nothing of any thing elſe; becauſe I am not a ſufficient judge,

judge, having read it a long while ago; and, when I did lately, very haſtily; though I think it much eaſier to underſtand than to define or ſettle what you aſked me. LETT. IV.

As for any dangers from a profeſſion, or what is greater, perhaps, from the maxims and practice of the world, or the influence of worldly things, I am really perſuaded that the beſt remedy is the thought of another world and a better one, which the goſpel ſets before us with the greateſt certainty, and in a very advantageous light, with many circumſtances belonging to it, that are very clear and very affecting.

This beſt happineſs and good in the goſpel is made real and ſet plainly before us, with great advantage, when the whole is conſidered. I could not now forbear ſpeaking of this as the beſt remedy, though I have no right from my own practice.

Adieu. C. W.

LETTER V.

May 3d, 1759.

Dear Sir,

LETT. V.

I have been now for a long time not ſo much pleaſed with a notion that I fell into many years ago, and which I learned from ſome fine writers, as I thought them, (and others think the ſame) that there is a ſtrict connection between the beſt accompliſhments and the beſt qualities; becauſe one may ſee in fact that theſe things, in ſome inſtances, are really ſeparated. I own it ſeems to me quite wrong to make a good judgment of any kind the ſame thing as the real good quality; becauſe the beſt and trueſt judgment, and even a right ſenſe of the beſt things, is by no means the quality itſelf; but I fear we might really be without

without this, if we had the other. I think this is too true! However, if there is a connection in those things, which, I am perſuaded, ſhould be thought of as really different, it is better and ſafer to think, as I know one perſon ſays, "that "we can never judge of what is beſt or excellent "in any of the beſt acts, except we have clear "and juſt notions of the beſt things:" becauſe it is the imitation or expreſſion of theſe things that gives the higheſt excellence to any performance; and to think this may put us upon endeavouring to excel firſt at that end: whereas, the endeavour to form ourſelves or others from the other things may not be ſafe; ſince, without thoſe better qualifications, we cannot judge of theſe. But, we muſt be *directed*, you will ſay; and then the beſt performances in us of the liberal arts, being imitations of what is agreeable and right in the affections or ſentiments, it is very well: and the imitations of what is bad will feed and nouriſh the contrary: and then, to be ſure, muſic and painting are things of great conſe-

LETT. V.

LETT. V.

quence; and *music particularly*, becauſe it gets into the heart more forcibly, as our friend ſeems to ſay, ſhould be regulated by the public, or very carefully choſen by every perſon, as a training, and means to form the mind, or the temper rather, and to uſe it to like and to be pleaſed with right things; which ſome ſay is all that we want in order to poſſeſs them: and our friend, I think, ſays, is a good deal towards it. For the ſame reaſon, I ſuppoſe, as it is a good part of education, ſo it will be a good part of our entertainment in life afterwards; (that is the word that I think, anſwers alike in his διαγωγη, which he diſtinguiſhes from play or diverſion, (παιδια) which, he ſays, is a relief from uneaſineſs or fatigue from things diſagreeable; and, by being relief, ſeems to be pleaſure, and to be without reference to any thing after: but it has reference to what was before. But muſic is a pleaſure of itſelf, and not a common one from the agreeable ſounds, I ſuppoſe, but becauſe of the affections or ſentiments which it raiſes, and which it feeds; and

the

LETT V.

the διαγωγη is that part of life in which we enjoy our beſt pleaſure, which is different according to the diſpoſitions and tempers: muſic, by this account, and in my real opinion, will be a good thing to enjoy, and to dwell upon, if it feeds or gives good ſentiments, and if it can give good thoughts, which he ſays; for then it will be uſeful for the διαγωγη, or our beſt ſpending our time in leiſure. It is uſeful to us as a diverſion and relief; (προς παιδιαν, for, I think, he reckons this) and then another thing; it cures paſſions, or, by raiſing and employing them, it makes them cure themſelves, as I underſtand it; for I do not underſtand it well: but this, I believe, is ſomething of it. You will ſee ſomething more of it in the *poetics*, and in the chapter upon *tragedy* in his definition; part of which is that not by any precept or advice, but by the means of pity, and terror, it affects the hearing, a ſalutary diſcharge of thoſe paſſions. So it is in many caſes: when managed ſkilfully, the paſſions are uſed to clear and to bring them-

LETT. V. ſelves to the due temper. The beſt notion I have of this kind of cure is this, that it is a kind of experience without the ill, or too much, effect, that experience itſelf would have: and by this means good writing, or whatever will do this, is excellent; becauſe it raiſes the paſſions to a more moderate degree than the real objects, and gives φοβον αβλαβη, or χαριν αβλαβη. (ſee his 7th Chap. B. 8.) I wiſh he had ſaid more, as he ſays he intended in his poetics to ſpeak of it on purpoſe. But it is loſt. This is all that I have to ſay.

Now I deſire you to explain to me what are the Αρμονιαι, of which, I think, he ſays that there are three very different? What are they? In what, do you think, they differ? What is the *harmony?* And what is the *rythmus?* I am to blame, that have had a deſire theſe twenty years to underſtand theſe things, and know nothing of them yet. I have not taken one ſtep, which

which I am ſorry to find, by ſo good authority, is neceſſary. I have not practiſed nor learned a note. How idle have I been, when I have really had a vaſt curioſity to know ſomething of theſe things, and have ſeen the hints about them ſo long ago! Pray tell me what thoſe *harmonies* were. But there is the misfortune that, I fear, I ſhall not be able to underſtand you. If you pleaſe, it will be a ſatisfaction to you to read what is ſaid upon theſe ſame ſubjects in *Plato's Republic*, (Book the third, about the middle, but nearer the beginning) What is there is very remarkable. I have ſeen it there a long while ago, and have not got one ſtep farther yet. LETT. V.

I am,

Dear Sir,

&c. &c. &c.

C. W.

LETTER VI.

October 2d, 1759.

Dear Sir,

LETT. VI. I Have been reading a book that is reckoned *philosophical*, and I believe to be very much so, though it is taken from the *world*. I am not a good judge of this; but it is, I think, his known character, more than any other book, I believe, in the world, on the same subject. It is *Aristotle* I mean and his *Ethics*. I do not pretend to be a judge of this; but it seems to be plain, that he writes from experience and from common sense; when that sense and practice too, in good and bad, (the good, I suppose, being few) was at the highest. It was from such a world,

world, and from the notions of men, carried by practice and experience to the greateſt heighth, that he makes his definition of *virtue*, and, I think, the meaning of the word, as it was then ſettled, not to be a good *diſpoſition* or good *meaning*, which ſeems to be a principle, in our notions, but a habit and ſtrength of *doing* what is right; which, by his explanations afterwards, muſt be ſteady, conſtant, and with pleaſure in the thing itſelf. This, it ſeems, was their notion; which was carried very high: but nothing leſs than this, I ſuppoſe, would be well received by buſy, active people, and much improved both in good and bad. He ſays that ſuch a general right action is happineſs. He does not ſay this from the ſenſe of the vulgar, but that of the wiſe, or of the better ſort: for theſe, he ſays, ſeem to think honour the greateſt happineſs: but honour is too ſuperficial a thing, and too much *without* themſelves, to be reſted in: therefore, it is probable, he ſays, that they love honour, as a teſtimony of their real worth, ſo that it is better than honour in their account: and, perhaps, LETT. VI.

LETT. VI.

perhaps, he ſays, there is reaſon to think, that virtue itſelf, the exertion of real good qualities, is more truly the end propoſed in public life. So he ſays the other thing, that goes a great way to its being happineſs; that virtue, or every right action, muſt, in itſelf, be *agreeable* to the doer; that otherwiſe it would not be virtue or right action: this, I think, it is ſomething remarkable that he takes for granted, as implied in the notion of right and good action; as, I ſuppoſe, it is now as much as ever, if we examine our own notion; and, therefore, had beſt be allowed without diſputes. For rewards and a view to them may very well be conceived: beſides theſe things, perhaps, you think, I like, as one ought to like, every thing that is proved or clear.

But there is another thing, of the moſt conſequence of all, that I am not ſatisfied with; and, you will ſay, I have not reaſon to be. I think it is not ſufficient. The queſtion is not,

he

he ſays, what virtue is, (and every one will ſay, he ſays this truly) but how I ſhall get it: how ſhall I get that habit, that ſettled and confirmed diſpoſition to do every thing well; which is the thing itſelf, according to him: for it is not virtue, even according to their language, as it ſeems, till it comes to this. "The way is in "this, as in other things, to practice."—"Avoid "extremes." I once thought he meant, Avoid (at firſt) hard trials and difficult things. But that is not what he ſays. He would have us always aim *right*. For this purpoſe, he ſays, it is of great uſe to conſider, that there is in our temper, and in things, a *too much*, and a *too little*, and that the right is ſomewhere between theſe. LETT. VI.

I cannot pretend to judge whether this is of great uſe: but it may be as good a direction as any other. By acting in this manner, and practiſing, you will gain both judgment and ſtrength. Who can but like this? And what he ſays afterwards;

LETT. VI.

terwards; "By not doing any thing, who can "ever think to make improvement to grow "better?" Then what he ſays immediately, which ſeems to be too good, as we think, for his gravity and plainneſs; "But now people do not "*do* theſe things, but run to books and fine "diſcourſes; and in this way think to be philo- "ſophers and good ſort of people: which is "doing as ſuch perſons do, who conſult phyſi- "cians carefully, but do nothing that they are "ordered to do or take. As thoſe people, there- "fore, grow well in their bodies, by ſuch ma- "nagement, ſo will theſe in their minds by "ſuch philoſophy," (as he ſays, or as we ſhould ſay) "by ſuch reading!" Are not theſe things very well ſaid and very right? I think they are. And yet if philoſophy, or if any thing, can give right notions and a good diſpoſition, it is a very good thing; for a good diſpoſition muſt be from the beginning and with every action, or elſe nothing is gained. For the ſame reaſon there muſt be ſome degree of ſtrength and power over

over ourſelves, or elſe we ſhall never, by experience or practice, grow ſtronger. What is to be done, if nature is deficient or wrong, when we have no diſpoſition or inclination to what is good, or when habits are on the other ſide? When every thing is done, ill practice cannot be the remedy. There muſt be ſome new beginning, that may ſet us right at firſt, and carry us on afterwards, with our own care and diligence, and readineſs to be led. This may be a truer goodneſs, as well as more effectual. I do not ſay what this is. Every body now knows what this beſt principle is, which is, or may be, a remedy in all caſes. We are all wiſer than the philoſophers: I really think we are: and, when I have ſaid this, you will ſay it is time to have done. LETT. VI.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate Friend,

C. W.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

January 22d, 1760.

Dear Sir,

LETT. VII. IT is my part to write to you; for I have more leiſure, and I want to know how you are. We hope it is all well, and that you have been able ſince to go on in thoſe deep ſpeculations, that you are determined to go on in; which ſhews great reſolution, and a very laudable one, I believe; and which, I hope, in none of your affairs, you will ever be the worſe for. I am only ſorry that at this time I have not been able to go on with you. I ought to have the ſame reliſh and the ſame reſolution; and, I believe, I had enough, if I had not ſome other amuſements;

(I do

(I do not know whether I can give them any better name) for I have been tolerably well ſince I ſaw you; elſe I ſhould have been glad to have read once more the fate of philoſophical people in this world, as we ſay, and how little reaſon they have at laſt to complain, if they are of the right ſort, and are really ſo. For both theſe things, I think, he explains well. (who ſhould if he does not?) But, I think, he ſhews, at the ſame time, how eaſily the world is too hard for them; how ſadly they ſink and fall; and, I think, he ſays by its flatteries as well as by its frowns. I ſpeak from a faint memory that I have of that part of him at preſent. I remember nothing ſo much as that I thought it, at one time, quite excellent. I do not know whether I did not think that ſuch an idea as he gives of the great powers of philoſophy, as well as thoſe of the world, might even be the means to fit one for this, and not only to deſpiſe or to leave it; which may be but a retreat and a poor eſcape at beſt, but by no means a victory. I

LTET. VII.

want

LETT. VII. want to read it, and ſhall find time again; for you encourage me in thoſe things. I want too to read again his notion of *good*; though it is, I fear, quite above my comprehenſion; and the compariſon and eſtimation of ſome chief characters in men, the degenerate, and fallen from the beſt, with the forms of bad government, to which they are like. For, I think, he ſays, and, I ſuppoſe, very reaſonably, that the men, and the governments, muſt needs be like, and take their colour and character one from the other. It is a long time, and eſpecially ſince I read this laſt part of him: for that about *good*, and what kind of ſtudies will beſt lead us to it, I have read after, and not long ago, but in vain. Who would not read upon ſuch a ſubject as long as he can have any hopes, and though he may hope reaſonably, that there is ſome other, and an eaſier way of knowing this? But that laſt part of him, of the different ſorts of men and of governments, I fancy muſt needs be inſtructive, and would give, perhaps, ſome juſt notion of morals,

rals, and of what great consequence they are; which I always thought (I believe strangely) to be the chief design given of what he calls his Republic, though he has, you know, another name for it, besides. LETT. VII.

I am,

Dear Sir,

With great respect,

Your most real and faithful humble Servant,

C. W.

LETTER VIII.

February 21ſt, 1760.

Dear Sir,

LETT. VIII. I ſee your letter has been received too long without ſome anſwer: it is dated January 21ſt. I have been pretty well, though I have not anſwered it; and, I am ſure, I liked it, and do not think you wrote any thing that was wrong or too much. It is clear, I think, that in reading the ſort of books that we mean, if we cannot get their whole ſubſtance, nor ſee their whole ſubject with the clearneſs that they did themſelves, yet we ſtill learn ſomething, and ſee enough to be a principle in our conduct, and have real good effect, when we are diſpoſed to reliſh the beſt.

And

And then their manner, certainly, which is ſo exact and clear, muſt teach us to be ſo too; which will be an advantage in every thing. With the ſame application to the ſame things that others have, we ſhall, if we have the ſame abilities, underſtand them as well or better than others do; we muſt get, in ſome degree, a *habit of clearneſs*. I believe you will think this the more, if you remember what *Mr. Harris* has ſaid of this very thing, as well as I recollect, in ſome defence he makes for his exactneſs and pains in the ſubject of *grammar*. He juſtifies, I think, the exactneſs, if it was not neceſſary to his ſubject, or if it was not of any conſequence, as what will come with us into other things. It is the ſame that ſomebody ſays of *Xenophon*; that, "being a *philoſopher*, and having been trained or having uſed himſelf to "*Socrates's* exactneſs of inquiry and expreſſion, "he was able to write hiſtory with ſuch perfect "clearneſs; and being, beſides, entirely ac- "quainted with the things, and all the detail, LETT. VIII.

LETT. VIII.

" by his own experience, and having been ſo " much in action." For this, to be ſure, it is neceſſary to know the ſubject, whatever it is; and, if it is an affair of life and buſineſs, to know it by being *in* life or buſineſs. But ſtill the other exactneſs was that which gave him that perfect order and clearneſs in common things above all others who knew the things as well. Perhaps this may help to confirm you in your good opinion of this idle reading, againſt ſo many objectors that you muſt meet with: and, perhaps, this is the only thing that need be ſaid. For the things themſelves are what every body knows: we ſhould think no otherwiſe of them: for it is really ſo; they are the things of common ſenſe, and which every body knows in ſome meaſure; and we may inſiſt upon it, (if it is neceſſary that others ſhould approve what we do) that they are ſuch things as no one ought to, or can, diſlike, if they are well ſet before him, unleſs it be for reaſons that need not be ſaid: and the whole advantage really is that in

theſe

theſe books we ſee theſe things, and our own ſentiments, with greater clearneſs than we ever had them ourſelves; and we may be allowed to think with greater clearneſs than others commonly have. And there can be no reaſon why this habit may not reach to other things, eſpecially to the affairs of life, ſince theſe are a-kin; which is the advantage that theſe things have, perhaps, more than ſome other things, which are allowed to give a habit of attention and of clearneſs in general, though remote from the affairs of life, and not a-kin, and yet are uſeful in this reſpect, as the mathematics are: and this, I think, is defence ſufficient: and, if I can think of any other and better another time, I will give it you, that you may ſtand your ground againſt ſo many ſenſible people, naturally ſo, who deſpiſe our weak helps, becauſe they can go on ſo well without them.—I muſt have done: but I was juſt going to ſay one thing, that no books in the world are ſo fitted to teach every one that reads them to have a juſt regard and due value for

LETT. VIII.

LETT. VIII.

every thing that is in the world; ſo that they can never teach us to be aſſuming or impoſing upon others. If thoſe, whom you muſt ſee, and the world in general, have this good part too, as well as other things, without their teaching, it is well.

I fear the world does not teach every one to reaſon or debate any thing with freedom and impartiality. It teaches, what is the next thing, not to debate or diſpute any thing at all.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful humble Servant,

C. W.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

Remenham, May 6th, 1760

Dear Sir,

LETT. IX.

IT is very true, I believe, that what hindrance buſineſs may give is often well made up by its preventing and ſaving us from other hindrances, that would be as great and worſe; from amuſements, follies and paſſions, that employ us the more when we are idle.

But I ſee that you have been reading *Cudworth*, when you ſay that the mind loſes ſomething of its own force and excellence by being taken out to things foreign to itſelf. When ſhe comes home at night, or in the evening, ſhe lets grow her feathers, that in the various buſtle of re-

LETT. IX. sort, were *ruffled*, (I forget the words) and well nigh "*impaired.*" There is a moderation by which the different things, and each of them, may be done well: but to find this is the thing; and, as our own measures are often wrong, providence, I believe and hope, determines it for us, when it gives us or leads us to some necessary business, and contrives, by any innocent means, though far below our highest dignity, to "Keep us out of harm's way," as good governors take care. I believe *Cudworth* is clear and excellent in shewing the true use of the *Atomic* philosophy, or in determining the properties and powers of matter; which is only by keeping to one great rule or maxim, that plain one, upon which all reasoning, and, I believe, all business too, is built;—that *not every thing will come from any thing, nor any thing from nothing.* When he has fixed *what* matter is, upon that supposition he reasons; which those, who give matter all other powers, of which they had laid no foundation, do not: but they say what they please.

How

How matter comes to be any thing at all, or what the foundation is of thoſe real and eſſential properties, which it is ſuppoſed to have, and which thoſe, who make the moſt of it, muſt willingly allow it to have; this is another inquiry, which *Cudworth* does not go into; and, I believe, is needleſs for any real purpoſes. There is a depth in it, which, I believe, ſome of the old philoſophers were ſenſible of, and, therefore, took ſomewhat a different way to come to the very ſame concluſions. I only ſee that they determine juſt the ſame things; that life, and ſenſe, and reaſon, or that which lives and thinks, is the only real and eſſential thing. This is the concluſion of one that is allowed to be very ſtrict in examining every thing, and to have no zeal for any high notions; which makes his opinion the more convincing. How he comes by it, and by what ſteps, I do not underſtand. I ſee it is without diſtinguiſhing what belongs to matter. In ſhort, I do not underſtand him: but he ſeems not to allow any thing fixed in matter, LETT. IX.

but

LETT. IX. but a power or capacity merely of different properties; which ſeems to be not at all clear: and yet in his concluſions he is as clear as poſſible. Of this, I believe, I need not ſay more to ſhew you that I do not underſtand it; and therefore, I am entirely ſatisfied with *Cudworth*, and am very well content to go no farther, but very glad if I can ſee as far as he ſettles. But I muſt have done and ſhall be glad to hear from you.

I have no time to ſpeak of other things.

I am,

Your affectionate and real humble Servant,

C. W.

LETTER

LETTER X.

Kemenham.

Dear Sir,

LETT. X.

I Am glad your new place is advantageous. I thought it muſt give you ſome trouble, eſpecially at firſt; and, with that conſideration, I had eaſily excuſed my not hearing from you. I will not ſpeak much now upon any ſubject that we would be glad to know ſomething of, becauſe I may expect ſoon to ſee you: only one thing I would obſerve, as I ſee that you have read the *goſpels*, or the hiſtory of the goſpels, ſo far as it is there carried on; I could wiſh that as ſoon as it is convenient to you, and that I may have the ſatisfaction, when I ſee you, to have your opinion. I wiſh you may find time to go on but a little

LETT. X. a little farther, (but, indeed, I wonder how you find time to go on ſo far) ſo as to read, if it be no more than the five firſt Chapters of the *Acts of the Apoſtles.* For all that is in that book is vaſtly important, and, indeed, curious, if it was not otherwiſe of much greater conſequence, as it is the hiſtory of the firſt preaching and the ſucceſs at Jeruſalem itſelf, where the author of the goſpel had been ſo lately crucified, and his doctrine had been, and was ſtill, ſo much oppoſed. This whole part is extraordinary; the divine things, by which the goſpel was proved, ſo noble, ſo proper for that great purpoſe; and the human parts, the behaviour of the Apoſtles, ſo right, and of the oppoſers ſo natural and ſo likely; and all told with a remarkable clearneſs and with more continuation than any thing in the former hiſtory; becauſe this was all together, in one view and in one place. This part to me is extremely convincing: and, I ſuppoſe, the more ſo, becauſe it is the former hiſtory carried on beyond all expectation, and beyond all power

power of conception, or any invention of man, and not only above the Apoſtles and writers of the hiſtory; who, whatever abilities they might have, were not the likely perſons to invent any thing ſo perfect and ſo ſatisfying, but above the invention of man; as, I think, it will appear to any one who well conſiders it, and who will ſet himſelf to read it, as much as poſſible, as *a new thing*, which he had never heard of before: for this I do imagine, that the commonneſs of theſe things, or the oldneſs of the ſtory, having heard it ſo often from our childhood, by which it becomes indifferent to us, and we get a habit of not conſidering it; this impediment ought to be removed as much as poſſible; and then, I think, it would have effect. I ſhall be very glad to have your opinion of this thing; not only whether this is not a good kind of evidence, or even the beſt, or, at leaſt, the moſt rational, where it can be had; but whether there is not the ſtrongeſt foundation for this kind of evidence or concluſion in the facts of the hiſtory of the goſpel. It LETT. X.

muſt

LETT. X.

must needs be ſuppoſed, that this evidence will appear the more, as the facts or hiſtory are more or leſs underſtood and conſidered. But this I ſhall be glad of, if, from what we *do* ſee, we can imagine that this concluſion and evidence, upon a fuller examination and comprehenſion of the things, may be very ſtrong or ſufficient. I run on: but it is not really to inſtruct but to conſult you, and becauſe I ſhall be glad of your opinion.

I hope to ſee you about the time you mention in your letter, and ſhall be very glad to ſee your brother with you. Lay out a day or two, if you can, for this place.—I have a favour to beg of you.—Can you get eaſily any of the comments on your friend *Ariſtotle*? Thoſe, that I have ſeen a little of, or have ſeen commended, are theſe, and I would not venture, at preſent, upon others; *Simplicius*, *Andronicus*, *Philoponus*, and one *Ammonius*, commended by *Mr. Harris*, in the end of his grammar; and any other

other that he seems to mention with any appro- LETT. X.
bation. I think there is also *Simplicius* upon his book, *de Anima*, which I should be glad to get; and, indeed, any that is old, and before the *Scholastics*, upon the *Metaphysics*.

I am,

&c. &c. &c.

C. W.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

Oxford,

Dear Sir,

LETT. XI. THERE is no doubt, I think, that there is a connection, as you have obſerved juſtly, between *materialism in theory, and ſenſuality, or very low moral notions, in practice.* For how can they, who attribute, as you ſay, ſo much to matter and the ſenſes, avoid ſetting an high and indeed the higheſt value upon them? According to ſome opinions, if they were conſiſtent, ſenſation, or the ideas ariſing from it, would be every thing; for reflection is a mere word, unleſs there are ideas of another kind, and ſuch as belong to the ſoul itſelf. And, if there are none of

theſe,

theſe, there could neither be any ſuch thing as underſtanding, nor any thing of that liberty or power over ſenſe, or which is the ſame thing, over the world and its impreſſions, which is the foundation of morals. For, when they allow that the mind has powers and faculties of its own, thoſe are unaccountable upon their ſuppoſition: for how can there be ſo much as judgment or deſire, in any reſpect contrary to, or different from, ſenſe, if there are not ideas different? For we cannot judge or deſire without ideas. This philoſophy, therefore, if it were carried throughout, would deſtroy all morals. And, though men are often better than their principles, eſpecially if they do not ſee the whole conſequence, yet it is likely, and is, I ſuppoſe, found in experience, that wrong notions will have ſome effect. But the philoſophy, which you are reading, eſtabliſhes, however, that great foundation of morals, which is a right judgment and deſire of what is right and good. If the *real power and virtue* is, as it ſeems to be, dif- LETT. XI.

LETT. XI.

ſerent, or ſomething more than judgment and deſire, and more than even *choice*, (which ſeems to comprehend thoſe two) then this, perhaps, may be acquired or ſtrengthened by practice, by continual efforts and care; or, poſſibly, it requires ſome other aid and principle, which philoſophy cannot ſupply, and which muſt be ſought for by other means. Upon this ſuppoſition, philoſophy is imperfect or inſufficient; but *right* philoſophy, it is likely, may lead us on to what is farther; while that other ſort of reaſoning, by its own nature, if the men were not better than the philoſophy, would extinguiſh every thing. All that I can ſay, more than you ſay, is that even this charming philoſophy, which is ſo real and ſolid too, as well as agreeable, is not, however, to be truſted or relied on, without ſome better help, even as excellent as it is. And this, I know, you will eaſily allow, eſpecially as it is no real objection to it. For who thinks that virtue can be learned by a book? And yet a good book, or a good theory, is much better than

than a bad one. But another thing, I fear, you will find, as you go on; which is not, however, an objection to the design of what you are reading;—you will find, I believe, that the arguments will not hold for what they are designed. But some of them are upon principles that you would not allow, as that from *Reminiscense*; and others that come nearer, and which really prove that our mind is different from matter, and that it is something more than sensation, do not prove that it is eternal or immortal; which no argument can prove, for this reason, that whatever the nature of mind is, however fitted for duration, and for another state, yet still it must needs depend upon another Being, upon his will and power, since it can have no being otherwise. If they prove that there is such a being, that there is a mind eternal, (which they do, I suppose,) that will be sufficient gain; and for ourselves, we shall be content to depend upon HIM. What hopes we have must be from other arguments, that are founded upon his wisdom and goodness; LETT. XI.

LETT. XI. or, if these are not sufficient, from some revelation from himself, which your philosopher, as a reasonable man, says is best of all.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend

And real humble Servant,

C. W.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

Remenham, September 12th.

Dear Sir,

I Can conceive, more than you ſay, that, upon this occaſion, you have, as uſual, gone through a great deal of diſagreeable ceremony and idle viſits. There is a duty we owe to the world, which we muſt go through as well as we can: but I think that thoſe, who go through it beſt, had beſt avoid it, as far as they can, without offence; ſince the beſt happineſs is at home, and the pleaſures of converſation can be only with friends, or with choſen and reaſonable people. With others it muſt be gone through as an *exercise* chiefly; and, in this reſpect, may do us

LETT. XII.

LETT. XII.

ſome good: beſides, that ſome good things are to be learnt even in company that one cannot much eſteem; and bad things themſelves may be inſtructive. For my part, I chooſe to read and think of what I pleaſe: and, in the little that I am able to do, I confine myſelf a good deal to my own neceſſary and proper buſineſs, though with little ſucceſs; which muſt be my own fault: for I muſt have improved, if I had ſought moſt the beſt improvements. But I have endeavoured to underſtand ſome things, which it is not neceſſary to underſtand; and for theſe I have not had attention or clearneſs enough; and beſides, I believe, I want the means; a larger reading and learning than I have had: for this may be neceſſary, if one has not the happineſs to fall into the right train of oneſelf. One thing, I think, I ſee plainly; *the excellency of the morals, and the certainty of another life;* becauſe it is a *revelation;* and of this I am ſatisfied, without all doubt, by no other evidence than the appearance of the things themſelves, eſpecially in the *New Testament,*

Testament, the goodneſs of the deſign, and the means and manner in which it was conducted. By both theſe together, it has, in my real opinion, its own evidence. Though I do not mind theſe things, or my proper buſineſs, as much as I ought, yet this, I believe, I can ſay truly, that I have applied myſelf much more to theſe things than I have to other things, which do not ſo properly belong to me. If I think of theſe, and ſpeak of them oftener than I ought, I will venture to ſay that, I think, I concern myſelf no otherwiſe about theſe, or farther, than I think they flow from the principles of *religion* and *morals*, and are neceſſary to preſerve or promote them. I chooſe thoſe principles in *politics*, (as they are called) which, I think, are moſt immediately connected with *religion* and *morals*, and endeavour to concern myſelf no farther; or, not to go, with the ſame zeal, into queſtions and diſputes about particular things or perſons; though I think, however, that general principles cannot be without influencing and directing

LETT. XII.

LETT. XII.

people on both ſides to a choice of particular things and perſons: for it is by particulars that general things are to be accompliſhed. But I mean that I endeavour to go on cautiouſly in the approbation of *particular things*, becauſe I may be miſtaken; and of *men*, becauſe I do not know them.

I am,

Dear Sir,

With real regard,

24 OC 62

Your faithful, humble Servant,

C. W.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

Remenham, October 7th, 1757.

Dear Sir,

LETT. XIII.

I Was glad to hear from you, and that you were better, or had hopes, by the *Malvern* waters. I imagine it was very good advice that recommended to you ſo ſimple a remedy with exerciſe; which you have partly by going to it, as I ſuppoſe you do; for I do not remember to have heard that it is drank any where but at the well: but I ſuppoſe it may be drank at home with leſs effect; which would be convenient in bad weather. I believe I muſt be your doctor, to preſcribe one thing;—that *you ſhould not be too intent upon any thing*, but take eaſy ſtudies.

Read

LETT. XIII.

Read *Homer*, and delight yourself with his chariots and his horses. The importance that he gives to little things, in my opinion, is very agreeable. I do not know whether it might not all be considered in the same way. For, as he had a great mind, and we may suppose had notions above the world, though he was in his condition low, and submitted himself to his condition, (for he was a good sort of man, as he has always been reckoned, and, if his notions were above the world, he might the more easily be content with any part in it.—You see how I amuse myself and write at random) I say, if he was really a genius, and conceives things perfect, and as they are not to be found in this world, is it not likely that he saw that his *Agamemnon*, his *Achilles* and *Diomede*, as well as his *Nestor* and *Ulysses*, were all wrong almost, though he sets them off with all the grace and importance that he can? And did not he see that anger, and every other passion, is weakness, though of great consequence in human life; that war itself is a low

low thing, though it is great for men; and therefore he deſcribes it with ſuitable importance? So even of his gods and his divine perſons there is no doubt but he could have conceived better; but he took them as they came to him with all their imperfections; giving them ſometimes a real greatneſs more than belonged to them. In this view does it not appear that he is always ſuperior to his ſubject, and that, when he is moſt in earneſt and moſt tranſported, yet he always knows what he does, and is always in temper? And from this does it not follow, that, if we conſider his higheſt poetry as only amuſement and play, if we are in temper properly, and not tranſported more than he is himſelf, we ſhall read it with moſt pleaſure and moſt improvement? For, if we ſhould think that *Agamemnon's* ſtate, or *Achilles's* heat and violence, is real greatneſs, or that war is the greateſt thing that it is poſſible for men to conceive, becauſe he dwells upon it ſo much; ſhould not we be miſtaken more than improved by reading him: and ſhould not we be

LETT. XIII.

wiſer

LETT. XIII.

wiſer, and have more pleaſure too, if we can ſee that there is ſomething higher and more perfect than theſe things and thoſe characters, and yet ſee that beauty and greatneſs in them which he deſcribes? For this way his poetry will have more effect, to bring us to a right temper more than any burleſque or low repreſentation: for in his way we ſee them have juſtice done them and more than juſtice; and yet we may ſee that he is ſuperior to theſe great things, and not tranſported, but knows a better thing, which is that temper that is above all theſe in all their greatneſs. It is at leaſt certain that he ſaw imperfections in all his great characters, becauſe he has marked it, and does not aim to draw them perfect: and war he deſcribes with pleaſure, becauſe it intereſts all human affections: but that he knew himſelf a higher temper and more divine, or really great and happy, I think no one can doubt from all that appears of him; and that he had better ideas of a deity than what he deſcribes, I believe every one muſt think. I do not know, whether you

you will ſee from this, that I am aiming at ſome degree of happineſs, by being quiet, and by allowing the world to have more pleaſure, more accompliſhment and ability, in every way, than I deſire for myſelf. I beg my beſt compliments and reſpects to all the family. Pray is your eldeſt brother come home? Has he received a letter of mine? And has any one heard lately from your couſin? LETT. XIII.

I am,

Dear Sir,

24 OC 62

Your affectionate humble Servant,

C. W.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

Remenham, July 20th.

Dear Sir,

LETT. XIV. I Was in hopes to have had the favour of hearing from you, and desire it still, when you return again, or at any time of leisure and a good opportunity. I pray God to direct and preserve you. Keep your men as far as possible, and as far as depends upon you, from all outrage and immorality. You know we are equally in God's hands, equally objects of his power and goodness, whether we live or die; and it is right itself to submit ourselves to him, whatever is the consequence. With these principles, consider them, and do all your duty;—your prescribed and

and known duty: for it is he who requires it. LETT. XIV.
It will be very ſeldom, I ſuppoſe, that it can be neceſſary, in any ſenſe, to do more. I would not deſire, as your friend, to hear that you attempt any unneceſſary things.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your moſt affectionate,

And faithful humble Servant,

CHRS. WELLS.

FINIS.

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